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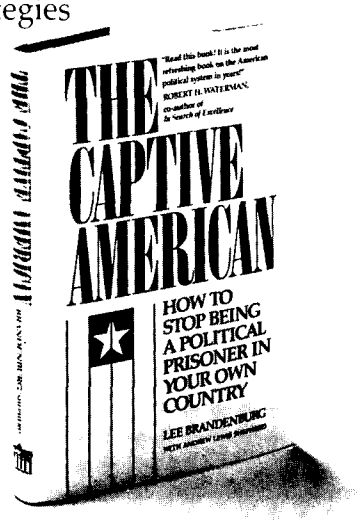

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LETTERS

Class wars

Charles Peters ["Tilting at Windmills," October] says I "wrote in a recent issue of *Newsweek* that in the late sixties and early seventies the young antiwar protestors, simply by opposing the war, had done the most effective thing they could do to save the poor blacks and whites who were doing the dying in Vietnam."

I didn't write that and don't think it. Of course simply opposing the war wasn't the *most* effective thing to do. Of course the war would have ended sooner if either all the antiwar types had resisted the draft and gone to jail or if all had been drafted. (Either would have prompted our parents to raise hell, which is why LBJ made sure it was easy for us to avoid the draft.) And of course protestors should have made more of an issue of the class-biased draft, although my impression is that many did try to raise it, especially the more Marxist types.

My points in *Newsweek* were simply, and unoriginally, these: a) protesting the war was honorable and right, contrary to all the subsequent neoconservative revisionism, and b) despite the "flag-burning and similar Jerry Rubin-esque gestures," the antiwar movement as a whole helped to end the war—even if other things might have ended it sooner.

There's a deeper charge buried in Peters's criticism, the idea that antiwar types, by not serving or going to jail or raising the class-bias issue, had contempt for the people who were "doing the dying." There was some contempt in the air, most clearly visible in the odious antiwar film *Hearts and Minds*. But the larger point, I think, is that those who protested the war were doing something to prevent the people doing the dying from having to do any more dying.

MICKEY KAUS
New York, New York

The editor replies:

My friend Mickey Kaus did write in *Newsweek*, "We were antiwar protestors precisely to try to prevent the boys of Chelsea and West Virginia from dying." The word "precisely" was not used with his customary care.

Vietnam's Vann guard

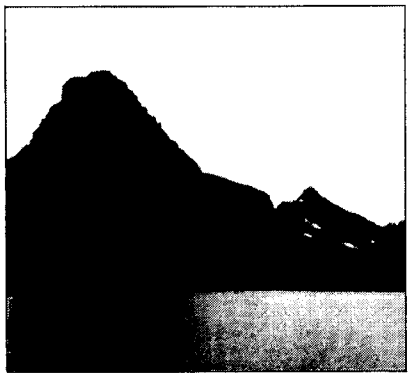
When I was young, my grandfather was fond of pointing out that when a person is in big trouble, he needs a lawyer and not a golf player. The same applies to soldiers.

This brings me to Taylor Branch's favorable review of Neil Sheehan's book about John Paul Vann ["A Soldier's Story," October]. I was an artillery captain on Mr. Vann's staff in 1968-69. Mr. Vann had the overwhelming respect of professional military officers as well as amateur reservists like me. Neil Sheehan will get rich savaging Mr. Vann, and that is regrettable, mostly because of what it tells us about the value today of honor, duty, and country.

In the time I knew John Vann he displayed not one iota of cynicism, and contrary to Mr. Sheehan's "lie," his professional life was an open book. All leaders do a little unseemly self-promotion. Earl Warren's early days as a prosecutor do not invite close scrutiny, but we forgive Earl Warren because he, unlike Mr. Vann, was on the correct side of history. The current deprivation, tyranny, and slaughter in communist-held Southeast Asia should by now be overwhelming evidence that not everyone who believed in the war was either a dupe, opportunist, racist, or colonialist. John Vann's soldierly courage and personal heroism were utterly inconsistent with cynicism. The willingness to win posthumous medals hardly makes a person either a cynic or a self-seeker.

Most important, however, John Vann was right from the start, and everyone else—from that stuffed prig William Westmoreland to the students at Kent State—was utterly wrong. No amount of womanizing negates the fact that if Mr. Vann's strategy had been accepted, we and the long-term forces of enlightenment would have won. The South Vietnamese government wasn't all that bad. It wasn't all that good either, but then it wasn't governing Switzerland. The Thieu government was a typically corrupt, incompetent, Third World operation. But it was not totalitarian and, except for the proclivity to be indifferent to the rural population that sent Mr. Vann into uncontrolled rages, it was not oppressive in the sense that North Korea, Albania,

America is worth fighting for.



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or Uganda are repressive. In 1953 the South won in Korea, and today we see real democracy and a country prosperous enough to host the Olympics. But in 1951 the Korean government wasn't something to write home about and the country was a slum. That, by the way, is still true in the North!

Make no mistake about it: John Vann and those who served under him knew what we were fighting for. We were not fighting for American prestige, American empire, or because we needed jobs. We knew that we were fighting to make a better world.

RICHARD NEELY
Charleston, West Virginia

Richard Neely is a justice on the supreme court of appeals in West Virginia.

Thank you, and thank Taylor Branch, for his excellent essay on Neil Sheehan's new book.

We ought all to be thankful to Neil Sheehan. It is courageous of him to admit having been bamboozled by the Best and the Brightest in Washington as we slouched into Vietnam.

Henry Kissinger has written, according to Anthony Lewis in a *New York Times* column, "We went into Vietnam on the assumption that Hanoi was 'the cutting edge of Sino-Soviet global strategy.'" But, "in retrospect," he said, "we know that Hanoi was working for its own account." Mr. Lewis comments: ". . .that comment blandly tells us the founding premise of the war was false."

I rejoice that Mr. Sheehan's book is being well received.

BARBARA WYMAN
North Sandwich, New Hampshire

Our ad diction

I can understand your distaste for cigarette ads and your desire to see them eliminated. We all have these lusts for purity in our society; but, absent any requirement for personal responsibility, I doubt that we will ever get there.

But if cigarette ads are an abomination, what about that ad you have for radar detectors? I, for one, cannot figure out any legitimate purpose for such products. They are designed solely to alert a speeder to the fact that police are in the offing.

Fun and games, maybe? Forty-eight thousand dead on the highways is not funny, it's tragic. Read the ad you took money for, Mr. Peters, and explain what it is trying to do.

JOHN CARTER
Earlysville, Virginia

I find it passing strange:

That on the same pages where you castigated the Department of Transportation for allowing cars that travel in excess of 155 miles per hour ["Tilting at Windmills," September]; that on the same pages where you excoriated rich tobacco companies and newspaper owners because they lure people into tobacco addiction; that on the same pages where you champion an innocuous, but hopefully beneficial, label warning of the perils of alcohol; that on those same pages you have a radar detector advertisement

The Washington Monthly

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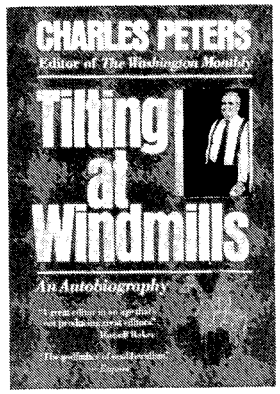

Tilting at Windmills

The Autobiography of Charles Peters
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MYRON SPONDER
Washington, D.C.

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Bombing with Bush

In your discussion of a potential candidate for the directorship of the selective service program ["Assistant Secretary of What?" October], I think you may be wrong. You mention that in World War II the establishment was quick to supply less risky airplanes when the sons of the Bush and Kennedy families were flying dangerous planes. You may be right, but the evidence you offer doesn't support your argument. It is true that the old P-40s couldn't match the performance of the ME-109 or the Zero, but the 51 was not rushed along to take its place, whoever's son was flying them. In fact the 51s were designed for the British, and only when the RAF found the 51 compared favorably with the Spitfire did the U.S. begin to think about building them for American use. Its superiority wasn't immediately apparent to the air corps brass—the rival they thought would do the job was that universally agreed lemon, the P-39. They also went forth with plans to build the P-47 and the P-38, both planes of some distinction, but neither as successful as the 51 would prove to be.

One more small piece of evidence against your theory that the likes of the Kennedys did not get sent forth in unsafe planes is the stupid decision to send Joe Kennedy on that experimental run against the harbor facilities in France.

DUANE LOCKARD
Brewster, Massachusetts

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Napoleon's odds

Author Scott Shuger, in his cogent presentation of the incompetence resulting from too heavy a reliance being placed on hardware, instead of human skills, that led to the Vincennes fiasco ["Why Did the Navy Shoot Down 290 Civilians?" October] merely reinforces the lessons of history that have been ignored by successive commanders in their ongoing infatuation with the latest military toy—be it a crossbow or a computer.

Napoleon probably said it best—"In war, morale counts for three-quarters, the balance of manpower counts for only one quarter." Nowadays manpower is replaced by machinery, which probably lengthens Napoleon's odds even more. If the war colleges were to train "commanders" instead of mere "managers," all three services would benefit enormously.

One last thing. Nowhere have I read an explanation of why the Vincennes was situated precisely where it was. I don't mean the Persian Gulf, I mean directly under a heavily travelled civilian airway. Surely being stationed ten miles or so to one side or the other of the centerline of the airway would not have seriously hampered its effectiveness in whatever it was that it was supposed to be doing. Perhaps then it wouldn't have been so dependent upon an unread Official Airlines Guide!

GORDON D. SAVAGE
Belmont, California

Morton Downey and Jessica Hahn

I was rather disappointed to read the little blurb about Jessica Hahn in your recent issue of *The Washington Monthly* ["Tidbits and Outrages," October]. I mean really. . .was that trip necessary? I don't recall her doing anything wrong. As Morton Downey Jr. would say, "Grow up guys."

W.L. SCHUBERT
Monsey, New York

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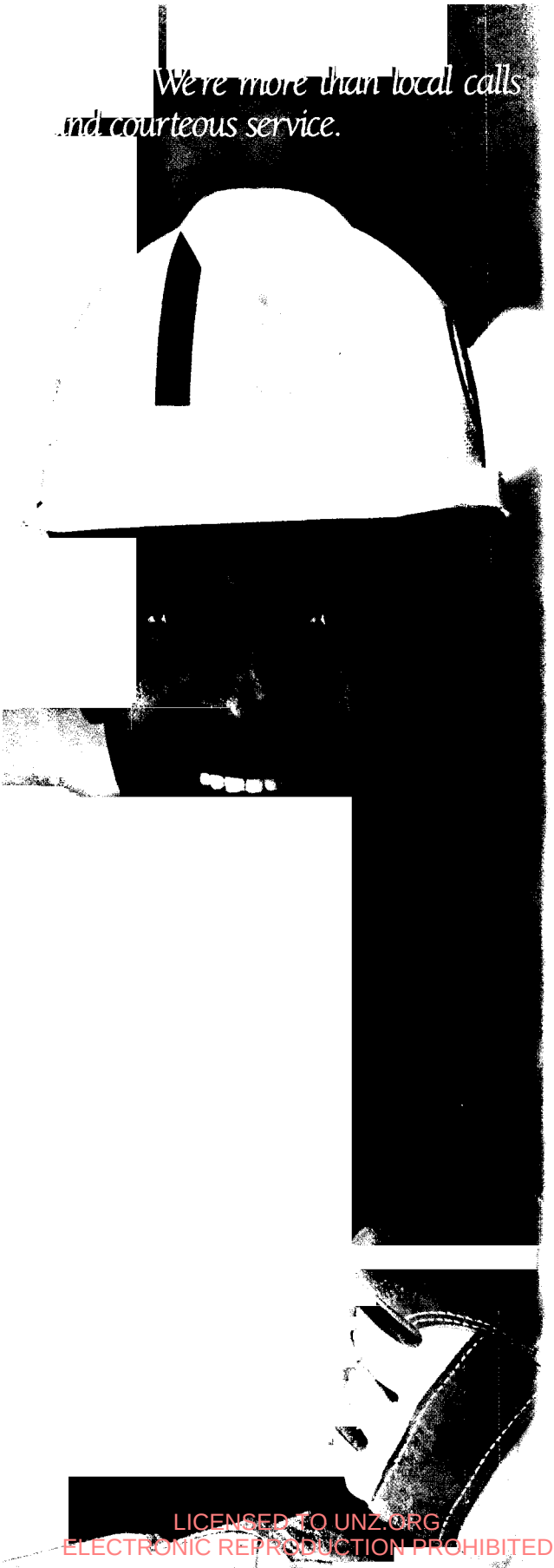

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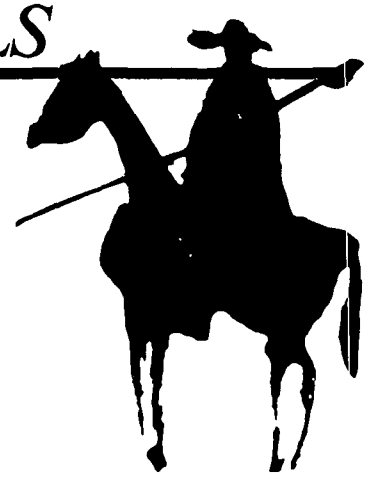
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



Not long ago I was watching one of those wildlife shows on public television. It was about some orangutans who had been domesticated and were living on a farm with a family of human beings. But now the orangutans were being sent back to the jungle. The absolutely unquestioned assumption was that the orangutans would be happier back in nature. How did the television people know this? The orangutans looked happy to me. They might very well have thought it really was a jungle out there in the jungle, and they didn't want any part of it. Far better to sit around the hearth watching MTV and munching popcorn. . . .

The most accurate portrayal I have yet seen of what romance between Washington careerists is really like came in the recent television film "Favorite Son." In one scene, after Senator Terry Fallon has committed sodomy—"no, no, not that way, Terry"—on his beautiful aide, Sally Cain, she rises from the couch, straightens her clothes, and says, "Now, about that amendment to House bill 122." . . .

When they say your flight has been canceled and you look around and notice only a dozen or so people in the waiting area, do you ever suspect, as I must confess I do, that the airline has used an alleged mechanical or weather problem as an excuse not to fly a flight that would have been unprofitable? My suspicions grew more acute when I learned that one of the most frequently canceled flights is the Eastern Shuttle's last—and usually least patronized—flight of the day. You are, by the way, more likely to have a flight canceled by Eastern than by any other airline. . . .

Now I must face the fact that in our September issue I predicted Michael Dukakis would win. My reasoning was that Dukakis had run an error-free campaign during the primaries, while Bush had often seemed foolish. In presidential campaigns where the difference between the candidates seems slim, as in the Carter-Ford race, the press tends to focus on gaffes, and I thought Bush would supply them with far more ammunition than Dukakis. But my words had barely been written when Dukakis got in that tank.

Bush on the other hand managed to shed the wimp image from the convention on. He was helped by the fact that the press let him get away with not having the press conferences in which so many of his past mistakes had been made. And after being guilty of overkill on Dan Quayle for the week or so after his selection in August—recall the absurd stakeout of Quayle's home—the press laid off for the rest of the campaign instead of hammering away at Quayle's bubble-headedness, and at Bush's atrocious judgment in choosing him, as it should have.

Dukakis, for his part, was handicapped by a defect of modern liberalism that has long troubled this magazine. It is the liberal intellectual's disdain for the average man's views on religion, crime, and patriotism. The latter two appear to have been crucial in this election. Too many liberals seem to think that you have to be antiblack to be anticrime and that it is vulgar to be openly patriotic. Since the average

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man disagrees, these liberals are having a hard time winning elections. What is most depressing is that the liberal positions on these issues are usually at least half wrong—just because, for example, most right-wingers *are* antiblack, and anticrime doesn't mean that liberals can't be problack and anticrime—and if reexamined could give liberals a basis for reaching out to the rest of the country so that they can win elections and advance the great causes they are mostly right about.

The liberal intellectuals just love to think the average man is a bigot so that they won't give him a chance not to be by showing liberals are willing to be tough on black criminals. . . .

The issue on which I urged Dukakis to try to unite the country was the environment. But a few days after my advice appeared, a friend, who is a Boston reporter, wrote me and said, "He can't do that because of Boston Harbor." The Republicans knew what my friend knew and a couple of weeks later staged a very effective campaign event, with Bush touring the harbor and bemoaning its condition. And there seems to be no question that Dukakis was in part responsible for the condition of the harbor. In his first term as governor, he delayed building waste treatment facilities that were needed to clean up the harbor and to comply with the federal Clean Water Act. Besides, as one Massachusetts official explained to Robert Jones of the *Los Angeles Times*, "Environmental issues are not a personal passion with Dukakis.". . .

As for Bush, the big question has to be how did he suddenly stop being a wimp? My theory is that he did it by finding a greater wimp in Dan Quayle. By contrast, Bush seemed masterful. If, on the other hand, he had selected Robert Dole, everyone would have been reminded every day that his vice presidential candidate was smarter than Bush. And, of course, the Democrats could have been counted on to play tapes of Dole ridiculing Bush during the primaries. *I* would have played those tapes anyway. I think there is something about Dole's intellectual superiority that drives Bush crazy, so that the tapes very well might have driven him to commit the gaffe the Democrats waited and waited for during the campaign.

Bush's sensitivity to criticism, by the way, is great. It, too, has not been well reported during the campaign. I predict that it will be a serious problem during his presidency.

Another factor in the Bush victory is that most of the lords of the press did not lean toward Dukakis, so that all the careerists on their reporting staffs—and *their* number is legion—got the message that they would not get any kind of leg-up by blowing the whistle on Bush or Quayle.

In the old days, there was among reporters a strong tradition of thumbing one's nose at the boss. But today's prominent journalists are making too much money to risk losing it. And of course, everyone who wants to be a White House correspondent has been making sure that he or she doesn't irritate Bush. . . .

Further evidence of our need for a new Dickens that Matthew Cooper points out in this issue: According to *The Wall Street Journal*, households with incomes under $10,000 make charitable donations of 2.8 percent of their incomes; households with incomes of $50,000-$100,000 give 1.5 percent, barely more than half the percentage donated by the poor. . . .

Many of the finest Washington lawyers came here because they dreamed of working in government. They started their careers with a government agency. But then they left, convinced they needed to make enough money in private practice to afford to return to government later on. But each year, as their earnings from private practice rose, these lawyers found that there were fewer and fewer government jobs appropriate to their present station in life. How could a man earning $350,000 a year accept a role below the cabinet or at least the sub-cabinet level?

The tragedy is that there are thousands of interesting and challenging government jobs that these people would enjoy filling if it weren't for the injury to their sense of status. And the salaries paid by these jobs—mostly in the $60,000 to $80,000 range—permit a comfortable, if not lavish, life in Washington, especially if they put the kids through school while they were pulling in all that loot at the firm. Of course, if the family has grown accustomed to a Jaguar and a BMW, a Taurus and an Escort are going to seem a step down. But why not take it, why not get into work that's interesting

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and worthwhile instead of boring or morally marginal, as is the case with most of the work in private practice?...

Speaking of the morally marginal, Les Aspin, the congressman who holds the world's record for issuing press releases praising his efforts to slash Pentagon spending, recently had an air force plane fly him to the number-one college football game of the year, Miami vs. Notre Dame. He is also forcing the U.S. Army to buy 3,849 trucks it doesn't want. The trucks are made in Wisconsin. Guess where Aspin's constituents live?...

As for the government jobs—below the well-known ones at the top—those Washington lawyers should be trying to fill, we listed seven in our October issue. Now comes a new publication called *The Prune Book*, which lists 116 such positions. The word prune is used because the jobs are tough, but they also offer the potential for real accomplishment and satisfaction. Examples are Chief of the Forest Service, Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, and Assistant Secretary of Energy for Defense Programs, where we desperately need someone capable of cleaning up the mess that has become of the nuclear weapons program....

For the next target of our efforts to reduce armaments, I suggest we try to get rid of the tactical nuclear weapons that, according to Bernard J. O'Keefe, chairman of the International Task Force on Nuclear Terrorism, are strewn all over Western Europe, "where they are susceptible to theft, sabotage, accidental detonation or premature use....A single explosion," writes O'Keefe, "would be a thousand Chernobyls.".. .

Why should the government bail out the savings and loans and the banks? The idea behind the two deposit insurance funds, FSLIC and FDIC, is for the industry to insure itself against its bad apples. If the industry had a good record of warning the public about the bad apples, then it might be reasonable to ask the public to share more of the bail-out burden. But the industry record in this regard is dismal.

The best way to finance the bail-outs is for the government to lend the insurance funds the sums that are needed. But only on the condition that the banks and savings and loans gradually repay those sums through increased contributions to the insurance funds.

One thing the federal government can and should do is go after the bank and savings and loan officials responsible for recklessly conducting the affairs of the bad-apple institution. The State of Maryland did just that in the case of the executives of Community Savings and Loan of Bethesda, which the state had to bail out because of the mismanagement by its owners. In a law suit, the state got $112 million in damages from those officials.

This is one kind of litigation I favor. But as for most of the suits clogging the courts, my feelings are different. Washington's Metro system has had few serious accidents, but that doesn't mean it doesn't get

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sued a lot. During the fiscal year ending in June it was sued 213 times and was forced to pay a total of $42 million in settlements and jury verdicts. Patrick J. Christmas, an attorney, says, "If we get less than $100,000 in fees from Metro it hasn't been a good year for us." Since most of the suits are for bumps and bruises, Christmas was asked whether these cases were in the public interest. His reply: "If I was dwelling on all that, I wouldn't be able to afford to send my kids to private school.". . .

It is well known that tort litigation, in which an injured person in effect sues an insurance company, has been undergoing explosive growth. But did you realize that contract cases, usually involving an effort by one company to extract money from another, have grown even more? Between 1960 and 1986 tort suits in federal court increased by 114 percent, while contract cases grew by 258 percent, according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s Paul M. Barrett.

So it appears that with the clogging of the courts as with so many of our other national problems, there may be many villains but corporate America is number one. . . .

The hazard of trying to write history when you weren't there was illustrated last month by Charles Krauthammer, who, in discussing the Dan Quayle-John Kennedy comparison, quoted a July 1960 Murray Kempton column about a Johnson-Kennedy debate before a joint meeting of the Texas and Massachusetts delegation attending the Democratic National Convention that year. Kempton wrote, "Flogged and whimpering, Kennedy bit it off and departed."

Kempton is one of my heroes, but in this case he got it dead wrong, as did Krauthammer, by relying on just one source. I was in Los Angeles that day, heard the debate on the radio, read the contemporary news accounts of it, and talked to people who had been there. Kennedy was witty, charming, and in almost total command. His task was delicate—to win the debate without so offending LBJ that Johnson might refuse to support him in the coming election. He began, "I come here today full of admiration for Senator Johnson, full of affection for him, strongly in support of him—for majority leader.". . .

What's happening in housing? A few recent headlines tell the story: "Housing Crisis Grips Low-Income Women—Higher Rents Put the Squeeze on the Poor"—*The Washington Post.* "Builders indulge in mansion mania as rich get richer"—*Raleigh News and Observer.* "The Trend in Homes: Build 'to the Max'—Only a Manse Will Do for the Luxury Seekers"—*Los Angeles Times.* The *Times* reports that in such moneyed Southern California communities as Brentwood, Bel-Air, Beverly Hills, and Pacific Palisades "it no longer suffices to own a $1 million or $2 million home; on most every block, older models are being torn down and replaced by homes of 5,000 square feet, 10,000 square feet, 15,000 square feet and more. . . sometimes much more."

The four main reasons for this infuriating situation seem to be 1) the savings and loan industry, in the early eighties, began to emphasize go-go investments like oil wells and junk bonds and to neglect its traditional role as the financer of housing for the average man; 2) government programs for low-cost housing have been underfunded and ineptly administered; 3) by eliminating many other tax shelters, tax reform has had the unintended consequence of encouraging the rich to buy or build increasingly expensive homes, on which they can still get the mortgage interest deduction; 4) the increasing tendency of the upwardly mobile to establish their social class by means of visible symbols of consumption from fancy cars to fancy houses.

It may be that their mobility will soon be shifting direction and heading downward, at least in the District of Columbia, where Kirstin Downey of *The Washington Post* reports that so many expensive houses have been built that there is now a "mansion glut.". . .

We need a revival of real Christianity. That, to me, is the central message of Cooper's article on Dickens. Christianity has been corrupted by the shameless upward mobility of the Jim and Tammys and the narrow-minded selfishness of the Jerry Falwells. Martin Luther King gave us an unforgettable reminder of the power Christ's true message can have today. We need another King who will, in addition to preaching racial tolerance, scorn greed and inspire a great movement dedicated to service. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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What the handicapped movement can learn from a Totally Normal Guy

The Case for Denial

by Paul Glastris

The great achievement of the disabled movement, a movement that seems to have reached a kind of apex, is its drive for changes in technology and public policy and public attitude that have integrated the disabled into mainstream society as never before. These changes have come at the insistence of the disabled themselves: they hunger for normality, as anyone who has ever known a disabled person can probably attest. Behind the obvious signs of progress—the sloped curbs and reserved parking spaces and reengineered public bathrooms—is a good deal of quiet lobbying and organizing. Sometimes the movement has turned to more public displays: this year's protests at Gallaudet University or the wheelchaired veterans who periodically roll across the U.S.

Forging a movement for themselves may be the only way handicapped people as a group can advance their cause. But is that also true about individuals? I don't think so. Indeed, I've felt quite strongly for a long time that there's a harmful side effect to all this group consciousness. I can try to get at my concern by stating the movement's paradoxical logic. It goes like this: the key to being treated as normal is to identify with the thing that makes you different. Or: empowerment and freedom come only if you highlight your physical limitations. Again, I think this is probably true for groups, given the way our interest-group-happy system works. But for the individual disabled person to identify with his handicap can be insidious.

The wheelchair Olympics, or "Paralympics," for instance, seem sad to me. If normality is the goal, then isn't competing as a handicapped person, against other handicapped persons, in a strictly handicapped event, exactly the wrong strategy? With a guitar, or a computer, or a chess board, or a pen, they might compete for real, against all comers, in the wider world, in the only world that matters. Out there on the basketball court, however, they prove nothing, they overcome nothing. They clearly enjoy the experience of competition; the audience chokes up with sympathy and admiration. But has the cause of normality been advanced? Not really. In the end, they don't look to me, or to millions of others, I'm afraid, like real Olympic athletes, merely like a bunch of guys in wheelchairs playing basketball.

That sounds harsh, and it is. But it's not meant as an argument against noble dreams. Nor am I insisting that they "accept" their handicaps. Indeed,

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they've already done so. They have shown the world, and accepted for themselves, an identity: "handicapped athletes." That's just what I find so troubling.

Acceptance of reality is generally thought to be a good thing. It could be considered evasive, even psychologically unhealthy, for someone not to acknowledge that terms like "handicapped" and "disabled" accurately describe their physical impairments, if in fact they do. You are what you are, no use fighting it. But fighting stereotypes and promoting normality is what the disability movement at its best is all about. The movement undermines itself by creating new identities for the disabled (wheelchair Olympian) that are still less than normal. The disabled who fall for this new identity risk missing out, it seems to me, on a better, fuller identity.

Let me try to illustrate with a story. It was one of those things that happens to me once every other week; had I not been writing this essay, I would never have remembered it. I left my downtown Chicago office, rode the elevator to Michigan Avenue, and walked—as, alas, so many disabled people cannot—on my own two legs, across the street to a sandwich shop to pick up some lunch. I work for a magazine, and my mind was happily engaged with facts, quotes, ideas, and sentences from a story I was writing. Aside from a homeless person who inhabits a sidewalk near my building, the people on the street all looked perfectly normal: women clutching parcels of overpriced clothing, construction workers eating boxed lunches, professionals in their crisp suits and raincoats flapping in the wind.

I must have looked like one of those typical young professionals to the two attractive young women sitting at a table near the door of the sandwich shop—assuming they noticed me at all. Presumably they saw a fellow in his late twenties, dressed in a suit, walk by and pick up a red plastic tray, holding it against his chest as he perused the sandwich bin. He would have had his back to them as he bent down to retrieve a chicken salad sandwich on black Russian bread, but then he would have turned around and walked towards them to the refrigerator where the beverages are kept. They'd have seen him prop the tray with the sandwich between his chest and the refrigerator while he opened the door with his left hand, when suddenly they'd see the orange juice bottle he was reaching for fall heavily onto the tray, knocking the sandwich on the floor. As he tried to hold on to the tray while backing away from the refrigerator, they would have seen the refrigerator door snap shut, pushing the tray against him and sending the orange juice bottle careening off a wall and landing in a wet crash on the linoleum floor. They'd have seen a manager walk quickly over, and while assuring him there was no problem, nothing to worry about, pick up the chicken salad sandwich and place it gently on his tray. As the young man stood by the cash register paying for his sandwich, the two young women may have noticed the way he kept his right arm rather stiffly at his side. And as he walked by them on his way out the door with his bagged sandwich tucked into his left arm like a football, they may have noticed a terrible scarring on his left hand.

I imagine the women were embarrassed for me—probably a good deal more embarrassed than I was for myself. Within 30 steps of the shop, I was back to mulling over sentences. The incident was no longer in my thoughts. A self-protective mental mechanism was at work, a trick of the mind I have trouble explaining but which is constantly operating. The image of a man with a strangely scarred hand, fumbling awkwardly with his food, is not the image of myself that I see in my mind's eye. Back on Michigan Avenue, I am back to being just another guy on Michigan Avenue, special to myself for the ideas that occupy my mind but content to know that people on the street don't give me a moment's thought or a second look.

An early bloomer

At the age of ten, I entered a great new period in my life. Our family moved from Kirkwood, a sleepy old suburban township in St. Louis County, where I was perpetually bored, to a new house in the unincorporated western edge of the county. Our new subdivision was surrounded on three sides by adventure: wooded hills, creeks, overgrown fields, a horse pasture, and a pond. I thought I was going to lose my mind with happiness as I began to explore the place; my mother feared for her own sanity as I started bringing home pocketfuls of snakes and requesting permission to keep them in the basement. Unlike Kirkwood, the new neighborhood was filled with boys my age, so getting enough bodies to build a fort or to play a decent game of backyard football was never a problem.

I was what you would call an early bloomer. At the age of 11, muscles developed on my back and chest and arms and legs, giving me certain advantages over my bony friends. One of the rituals of seventh grade physical education was slinking to the top of the thick rope that hung from the gymnasium ceiling; I was one of the few kids in school who could climb it like a monkey without using my legs.

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I had always been a mediocre athlete, but now suddenly I was competing well in any sport I tried: basketball, baseball, and my favorite, soccer, a major sport in St. Louis. I also wrestled, and the older guys on the school wrestling squad, having noticed my strength, would often choose me for a partner to demonstrate to the younger crew how various moves and holds worked—a mixed honor that involved getting my face rubbed into the mat by upperclassmen. My brothers and I joined the swim team at the pool of a nearby subdivision. We were newcomers to the pool and to the sport, and so usually brought up the rear. But we improved with the grueling practice. At the end of the summer before eighth grade, I won a third place ribbon in the breast stroke. More importantly, I was beginning to attract the attention of the girls at the pool. Had I an ounce of confidence or a scrap of information, I'd have done something about it.

Most of my free time, however, was spent fishing on the pond, plucking crawfish from the creeks, or turning over logs in the woods and chasing after whatever crawled or slithered out. There was always something interesting to do in the woods, even in winter. On one typical afternoon in February, at the age of 14, I headed to the wooded hills with my buddy Dave. At the top of the highest hill was an abandoned house. It looked progressively more derelict as the years went by, and my friends and I dismantled it, sometimes to scavenge building materials, sometimes for no reason at all. Nearby were what looked to be abandoned telephone poles that once served the old house. A snipped wire hung from halfway up one of the poles and spilled onto the forest floor, and at its base was nailed a metal insignia of the local phone company. The pole smelled of pitch. Staring up at it, I wondered if the insulators at the top might not bring a few bucks; I'd seen similar-looking ones for sale at a nearby antique shop. So up the pole I climbed, an easy feat for a practiced climber like me, especially with the help of the ladder-like stakes that stuck out from either side. Once at the top I could see the insulators, which held wires that hadn't been snipped. I reached for one of the insulators with my right hand. I didn't know that the wires were carrying 7,000 volts of live electricity.

The TV trooper

My memory of the days that followed consists of short, vivid scenes accompanied by whatever I was thinking at the time. There is Dave standing over me as I lay on the ground ("How unlike me to have taken a nap in the woods."). There is the fireman with a pair of scissors, cutting my blue jeans from the ankles up, while assuring me that everything was going to be all right ("I can't believe this guy's ruining my favorite pair of pants."). There is my mother standing in a hospital hallway as I'm wheeled past her on a gurney, her face showing suppressed emotion (Trying for a bit of reassuring humor, I blurt out: "Well, Mom, looks like I messed myself up pretty good this time.").

Most of all I remember the towel the surgeon had draped across my eyes. I would drop in and out of consciousness, reemerging each time to find the damned towel blocking my view. I sensed the surgeon was a kind and understanding man, but his seemingly casual refusal to grant my repeated requests that he remove the towel struck me as patronizing. I was determined to assure him that I was brave enough to see whatever he obviously didn't want me to see. In and out I went, feeling no pain, no panic, just sleepy and curious. At some point I awoke with a keen suspicion of what the problem was. (Months later I found out that the surgeon, Dr. William Monafo, had explained to me what he'd done, but I have no memory of his explanation.)

"Doctor, is my arm gone?"

"Yes, Paul."

A long pause. "Can I see?"

Another long pause. Up went the towel. I lifted my head and looked around, as if emerging from a manhole. As I gazed at my right shoulder I remember thinking: "Hmm. How about that. Isn't that interesting." I had never seen human bone before, but there was a piece about half an inch wide, just below my shoulder, surrounded by a three-inch circle of angry-looking flesh. "Isn't that something," I thought as I lay my head back, feeling sleepy now. Before I dozed off, the towel came down over my eyes.

My 14-year-old mind was obviously engaged in some form of what psychiatrists call denial. Yet it wasn't the classic refusal to admit the painfully obvious. From the moment Dr. Monafo lifted the towel and let me look, and throughout the days and weeks ahead, I accepted the fact of my injuries. What did not occur to me, what I did not think about, what I "denied," were the ramifications. I had no dread about my future, no feeling of horror or revulsion or depression; the question, "Why me?" never occurred to me. It was not an act of conscious will on my part; my mind just naturally kept away from the fears and questions you'd expect I would have.

For the next six weeks, I did my best to cooperate with Dr. Monafo and his team at St. John's Mercy Hospital. They worked on me for hours at a time, first just to keep me alive, then to get my body to

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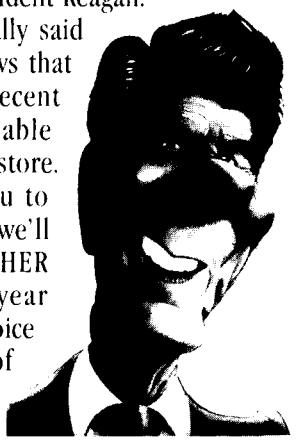

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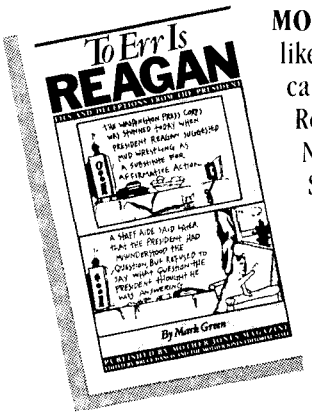

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I reached for one of the insulators with my right hand. I didn't know that the wires were carrying 7,000 volts of live electricity.

heal itself. I experienced varying levels of discomfort, and sometimes mind-bending pain, but I complained very little. Apparently this wish to cooperate, and the accompanying "denial," is not uncommon. "A lot of kids have this trooper mentality," says a friend of mine, a surgeon who has spent time in trauma and burn units. "It's amazing how goddamned tough they are. They have these awful injuries, and all they bitch about is not getting to see TV."

He's absolutely right about the TV. Throughout the ordeal, television was my friend. I kept it on constantly and was annoyed whenever someone turned it off. I was certainly given great loving care by extraordinary burn unit nurses. My mother and father were with me almost around the clock. For weeks the waiting room was packed with relatives, neighbors, friends of the family, priests and parishioners of our Greek Orthodox church. Armfuls of get-well cards and letters came to me. Every kid in my junior high school seemed to send one. A couple of girls I knew wrote every day. Letters came from people I'd never met. No human being has ever received so much love. It gave me great comfort. But not as much as the TV.

The TV and the drugs. At first it was morphine, in metal syringes. Morphine will make almost anyone a trooper. The first TV was a little black box mounted on a flexible arm. This was necessary because I was in a gyroscope-looking bed with an electric motor that would periodically flip me lengthwise, from my back to my belly. I felt a little like a grilled cheese sandwich, but the bed kept away bed sores and facilitated dressing changes—a painful business that was always followed by dousings of watery silver nitrate and another shot of morphine.

Later I got a regular bed, a regular TV, and Demerol instead of morphine. But the routine stayed about the same. First thing in the morning the lab people came. They were extra nice, always chatting and joking as they worked, complimenting me on my bravery—part of the necessary con to get kids through rough times. The burns made the process of extracting blood difficult and painful. Needles had to chase elusive veins in my feet because there were none near the surface of my left arm; almost every vessel had been destroyed by the electricity. So had all the nerves and most of the muscle between my elbow and my wrist. What remained of my forearm was bone and a thin layer of muscle. Somehow an artery had survived the assault, and it kept life flowing to my left hand. Burned and without feeling or movement, the hand was nevertheless still there, and keeping it alive became the all-consuming task of Dr. Monafo and a hand surgeon named Dr. Carlos Pappalardo.

After a while, I heard the joyous sound of short little footsteps clipping down the hall from the waiting room: my mother coming to feed me breakfast. I ate heartily: eggs, sausage, toast, oatmeal, juice, and to top it all off, a milkshake with protein powder. Burn patients need a massive amount of protein to heal. I consumed 5,000 calories a day, broken up into four meals. My stomach would sometimes rebel, and up the food would come. But I learned to shut my lips, shut my eyes, and swallow it back down.

I slept as much as I could from nine to five, out of fatigue of course, but also because daytime TV was a bore. Intermittently Dr. Monafo would come in, wake me up, lift my dressings and lecture to an entourage of young surgical residents who seemed to follow him everywhere.

Back to sleep I'd go, only to be awakened by one of those residents for a session of "debreeding." This involved laying me in a tub of saline while the resident trimmed off layers of dead tissue from my burns with surgical scissors. He worked on my arm and on the massive burn on my side. That burn ran from the bottom of my rib cage to the top of my thigh, and from my navel to my back. The resident would ask me questions about myself as he worked. I'd tell

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him about school, friends, sports, the woods. I asked him questions, too, eager to be part of the process. I learned that electrical burns kill cells slowly; you have to keep peeling away the dead flesh over many days before you know how extensive the burns really are. By the end of the debreeding, my hip bone was showing, and the ridges of intestines were plainly visible under a paper-thin layer of tissue on my side. After that, though, the process reversed itself. All that eating produced wonderous scar tissue which bubbled up to fill gaps and cover bones. Skin grafts—planed off my thighs—were then laid on top of the scar tissue. Several years later Dr. Monafo would emplant a two-foot-square sheet of Marlex plastic to keep me tucked in.

Afternoon would find me back in my room with my mother. I'd sleep or talk to mom or watch game shows and wait for the good programs to come on. If a doctor came by for a dressing change, she'd grill him with questions. My father would be there in the early evening, as would a steady stream of visitors. My large extended Greek and Irish family is not a somber bunch. Sometimes things would get pretty festive in the unit. I'd happily take it all in, though my eyes would drift up to the TV. When visiting hours were over, the nurses would herd everyone out as if closing down a bar.

At night, the burn unit would grow quiet and the fluorescent lights would go off, and my room would fill with the blue light of the TV. The nurses would come by asking if I was ready for my pain medicine, but I'd hold off until my favorite programs came on. Several of the nurses made me feel like I was their favorite patient, and so became my favorite nurses. I'd tell them about school, friends, sports, the woods; they'd complain about their boyfriends and husbands. A couple of these sweet women began to worry that I was holding back grief at my injuries and warned my parents that if I did not break down soon, it would be psychologically worse for me later. The breakdown never came, though I did collapse in tears once when one of my favorite nurses stubbornly refused to believe my claim that the doctors had wrapped my dressings so tight it was painful to breath.

At midnight, I'd ask a nurse to put the needle in my thigh, just in time to catch "The Avengers" on the tube. Discomfort would recede, warm euphoria would sweep over me, and I'd lose myself in Diana Riggs's stylish karate chops. By the end of the show, I'd have drifted off to sleep, my mind dreaming always of the same things: school, friends, sports, the woods.

The dream of getting back to my boyhood kept me buoyant in the hospital and filled me with excitement the day I left—thin, smiling, hardly able to walk. I gazed out the window as we drove home; the sky and the earth and the buildings along the highway seemed in super-sharp focus. Once home my parents and brothers helped me lay down on the couch in the family room. From there I could look out the porch window and see the wooded hills beyond the subdivision.

A whole movement has sprung up to defend and advance the cause of people like me. But whenever I see the movement coming, I run the other way.

Poolside pride

As I convalesced that spring, my teachers would drop by the house for one-on-one tutoring. They also got a "squawkbox" hooked up between our home and classroom. I could listen in on lectures, and with the press of a button, pipe in with answers to questions. My classmates thought this was terrific; they decorated the squawkbox on their end with a hat and glasses and a little sign that read "Paul."

With hard work and a lot of help from my parents and teachers, I made it through eighth grade. I was still at home the day school let out, but I felt the liberation and the beckoning of summer as keenly as anyone. My strength was coming back rapidly, and though my burns were not quite healed, I was soon back out in the woods with my neighborhood friends, stomping through the early summer

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undergrowth. That day I wore the burrs that clung to my jeans with extra pride, especially when I came home to find that two cute girls had dropped in to say hi. The pieces of my interrupted boyhood were falling rapidly into place; I saw nothing standing in my way.

I was, of course, deluding myself. The true ramifications of my injuries were still out there, waiting to be recognized. One day I went to the pool to watch my brothers in a swim meet. Full of innocent joie de vivre, I walked up to the poolside, eager to reclaim my territory. The gang of strapping young men and fetching young women greeted me almost like a celebrity. Then they fell back into their regular and seemingly relaxed poolside socializing, the kind that is really an intense, hormonally charged battle for status: flirting, clever banter, subtle flexing of muscles and tossing of hair. Sitting among the group I overheard the girl beside me complain to her friends about some tiny personal problem in that exaggerated manner teenage girls have. I listened, and looked down at the empty sleeve that hung from my right side, and the leathery, translucent skin on my numb left hand.

My soul quaked. The vanity and obliviousness of this girl was unbearable. Waves of insecurity and outrage swept over me. My presence there suddenly seemed pathetic. I went home that afternoon and bawled tears of misery and envy and rage, and from that day on, I avoided the pool.

War had broken out between my self-image and reality. My time in front of the mirror in my parents' room began to increase. As I stood there assessing myself, I noticed the curious way my mind would go back and forth between the parts of me that were burned and the parts that were not. The burned patches looked ghastly indeed. But the unburned sections still looked okay. In fact, they looked better than okay; at 14, a man is amazed by his own masculine physique. Flipping from one to the other, I slowly came to realize that I really didn't hate what was burned because it didn't take anything away from what was not. I didn't *like* it, but I didn't hate it either.

'Your Response Is Your Character'

by Jonathan Rowe

Her sister had said something about me, she said. "You know," she recounted, "he almost sounds as though he stuttered once."

We had been visiting her family at their farm in the Upper Midwest. Now we were pulling out onto the Interstate. The observation came totally out of the blue. She must have been waiting to tell me.

As the wheat fields passed outside, I savored every nuance. "Almost." "Once." Oh, sweet.

Scenes flashed through my mind. A little kid, lying in bed, wishing that his strange affliction would go away. The adults who kept telling him to "try to relax." A stutterer is *always* trying, probably too much. The English class in the new high school. His classmates had demanded that the teacher call on the new kid to read aloud, and he had dissolved into a sputtering puddle. And much later: the young woman who told him that she liked him but that his stutter made her nervous.

This last may sound cruel. But the honesty still staggers me. (When the shoe is on the other foot, I tend to slink off into the night.) People who stutter know they make people nervous. They even make themselves nervous. This fact screams out in every conversation, but no one is supposed to notice. This woman was paying me a compliment. She thought me big enough to handle the truth.

People who know me know that the problem is not entirely behind. There are days and times when the gears still seize that connect my mind to my mouth, and when the dread consonants, such as "d" and "p," loom up like guards at the East German border. But I'm not complaining. In fact, I hardly think about it anymore.

Self-pity has become a dominant note in our national discourse. George Bush talks about the need for capital gains tax breaks in tones more appropriate for appeals for blankets for homeless children. One hesitates even to appear to add to all this kvetching.

So right off: my problem was not great in the larger scheme of things. Growing up, I could play baseball and read and throw snowballs at cars. Anything that did not require formal speech. Compared to kids whose bodies didn't work, I had it pretty easy. In fact, despite my own problem, I was all too inclined to tease classmates who were slow or fat or had problems of other kinds. I never thought of myself as having a "handicap," only a kind of chronic nemesis that I learned to negotiate the way a tennis player negotiates the net.

The last thing I ever wanted—the last thing I suspect most "handicapped" people want—is sympathy. It may make people feel good to offer it. But all it ever did for me was make me feel bad. The

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Another battle in the war of my self-image ensued later that summer. My parents had been told that the best prosthetics work in town, and also the cheapest, was at the Shriners children's hospital. Late that summer, I was admitted for a two week stay. I'm sure the well-meaning people at Shriners have brought hope and joy to thousands of young unfortunates, but I was not one of them. Recalling my reactions to the place, I am moved to hyperbolize: the word "gulag" comes to mind. I'd sooner endure two weeks of debreeding baths then relive the experience of Shriners hospital.

My negative reactions began the first time my parents and I sat in the waiting room. Murals on the wall illustrated characters from Peter Pan. Whoever had painted the mural was either thick-headed or perverse: dominating the scene was an image of Captain Hook. Later, we met our first and only lousy physician. After examining me for five minutes, he recommended we think about having my left hand amputated and fitted with a hook. More practical. Eliminates the chance of infection. Then he left the room. My father, teeth clenched, started talking about killing him.

Things went downhill from there as I began my two week stay at what is officially called Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children. The place made me feel like an extra in a Fellini film. Paraplegics, amputees, and sufferers of a whole range of horrible physical and mental birth defects were expected to live in affable harmony in the boys' ward. Somehow I was not overcome by fraternal joy. One young fellow whose fingers had sort of melted together as a result of a burn accident tried to befriend me by suggesting we compare injuries. I couldn't bring myself to reciprocate. When the ward staff organized a pitiful-looking kickball game outside, I stayed inside, in bed, staring at the ceiling and listening to rock music on the radio I'd brought in.

Horribly injured patients occupied the burn unit at St. John's, too, but the difference in atmosphere was telling. The burn unit was geared to saving your life and making you well—a mission with which I was understandably eager to cooperate. But it seem-

people who helped most understood my need to stand on my own; if you want to cut a stutterer off at the knees, finish his sentences for him out of the kindness of your heart. (Unless you know him very, very well.) I am something of a fundamentalist on this point. If I encountered a man with no legs trying to pull himself through a Safeway entrance, I would stand back and let him struggle. Of course, at some point I would offer help. (Note I said *offer*.) But that man's dignity, his whole sense of manhood, might be bound up at that moment in making it through the door.

Friend for life

Talking is something you probably take for granted, just as you take for granted that when you want a drink of milk, your arm will reach for the glass and clutch it. But for someone who stutters, talking is like running air traffic control at O'Hare, during rush hour, with half the staff out sick.

The stutterer is struggling to handle three jobs at once. First, he's thinking about what he's going to say, just as you do. But he's also scanning sentences and even paragraphs ahead for dangers such as "p"s and "d"s that may lie in ambush. (When I first encountered the "search" function on a word processor, I felt that I had found a kindred spirit.) Then, he is frantically constructing jerry-built and circuitous detours that are often painfully obvious in such a person's speech.

As a child, daily life entailed strategies of a similar sort. If a seagull divides the world between "fish" and "not-fish," then a child who stutters divides it between "talk" and "don't have to." It dawned on me early on, for example, that an unruly boy sent to stand in the hall was a boy who wouldn't have to recite in reading group. In junior high school, as I became more socially self-conscious, things got worse. Though hardly an enterprising student, I became an assiduous observer of the recitation habits of different teachers. If one teacher started on the left side of the class, I'd choose my seat to the right and rear, to have the best chance of running out the clock.

My most vivid memory from those years is of Latin class. It is the last period on a sparkling fall afternoon. The football fields beckon outside the window, an incredibly inviting "don't-have-to" zone. The recitation, moving inexorably up and down the rows, is closing in on me. And the minute hand on the wall clock is moving like sludge. I count ahead to the question destined for me, and start repeating the answer to myself in a low drone. But then someone makes a mistake, and the teacher calls on the pupil next in line, changing the order and forcing me to revise my mantra. This happens several times. I am sweating. My face takes on the color that caused friends to call me "Red-beet Rowe." More than once, I gave an answer that I knew was wrong, but that at least did not begin with a "d" or a "p." Or I declared simply, "I don't know." Once one starts down that road, it's almost scary how easy it becomes.

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ed that the whole point of Shriners was to get kids used to the idea of being handicapped—a process that I found myself resisting with all my might. A capable prosthetic engineer did build me a sturdy arm with a hook at the end. On first sight of it my face flushed, but I put it on without a grumble. I hated the hook, but I liked the way the arm filled out my shirt.

I was less cooperative in the occupational therapy lab. I spent hours there with a somewhat sluggish therapist and a two-year-old, who, in addition to severe mental retardation, had been born with no arms, only fingers sprouting from his shoulders. The poor soul would sit among toys on a mat on the floor, straight-jacketed in twin prostheses, whimpering. The therapist would periodically and half-heartedly call out his name in a loud voice, vainly trying to get him to use his new appendages. Meanwhile she'd teach me various meager tasks I could do with my hook. I worked along, but without enthusiasm. She knew it, and subtly let me sense her disappointment.

My unpleasant experience at Shriners had one salutary effect: it revved up my desire to get back to normal life. The incident at the pool had clued me in both to the insidious quality of adolescent social life and to the invisible barriers that I might find in my attempt to return to it. But I felt I had no choice; I suspected the alternative looked a lot like life inside Shriners Hospital. School was about to start, and I was fired up.

The 'A' team

That first day, sitting in class and roaming the halls with my friends, all of us upper-classmen, was glorious. The invisible barrier I'd sensed at the pool was palpable between some of my classmates and me, but so too was my celebrity status. I wanted that barrier removed, and so I began what would become My Year of Overachievement.

Within weeks, I turned my celebrity status into a winning race for student council president. By year's end my administration counted among its achievements the acquisition of a soda machine, but in truth it wasn't a very demanding job. Perks were its chief attribute. The council had its own office in

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It is not easy to stand and watch someone suffer seizures over words. People finish sentences for a stutterer, I suspect, mainly to relieve their own distress. Perhaps this is why people laugh at stutterers as well. I am going to make a horrible admission. Even in my worst periods, listening to others stutter was excruciating for me, too. Perhaps even more so than for most: I knew that the way I was feeling was pretty much how I made others feel.

All I can tell you is that, to a person who stutters, your response is your character. If you stand with patience and poise, if you don't get edgy and start finishing his sentences, you will be deemed among the strong. You will be a trusted friend for life, even if you never see this person again. At times, this has actually helped me as a reporter. People reveal themselves in their instinctive response to another's discomfort or distress. On the basis of a brief interview at a recent Dukakis function, I am confident that Boston Mayor Ray Flynn is a genuinely decent man. That Senator John Glenn married a woman with a severe stutter tells me a lot about him as well.

One learns a lot about employers, too. It takes courage to hire, as a representative, someone who might not make the greatest first impression, especially in a culture as image-conscious as our own. My own personal hall of fame on this score includes Ralph Nader. I was one of his early "Raiders" and took part in the congressional hearing that was held on our report. As I recall, I didn't do a great job in presenting my own brief section at that hearing. This couldn't have enhanced the credibility that Nader was striving to build. But there was never any question that I would get to say my piece.

Because the sources of their problem are so elusive, stutterers tend to be introspective. Whatever else is involved, there is no escaping the strangely social nature of the affliction. When the social stakes were zero, for example, speech came fairly easily. Talking to a dog, for example, or a baby. Like most stutterers, I had no problems reciting in unison in school, as during the Pledge of Allegiance. (This made me a big pledge fan.) It was the presence of other—presumably judging—minds that caused the locks to clank shut. This is why the media portrayals of stutterers are so unfortunate, especially for kids. They reinforce the apprehension that only makes the problem worse. Few would think of making a movie in which epileptic seizures came off as gags. But in movies and on TV (most recently the film *A Fish Called Wanda*), the stutterer is a stock comic figure, a hapless bumbler whose strainings and contortions are a bundle of laughs. When I was a kid, Porky Pig cartoons were a constant source of pain. And, yes, I'm touchy on the subject to this day. Max Headroom, for example, the stuttering pitchman for Coca-Cola. Perhaps you found him funny. I didn't. And I don't buy Coke or Minute Maid products, which Coke owns. But I also don't think it's necessarily bad to learn, early on, that when a cor-

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which, between and sometimes during classes, the president and his friends could hold "meetings." I also got to read the end-of the-day announcements over the school's PA system, a power I occasionally used to humiliate those same friends: "Stewart Smith, please call your mother. Repeat, Stewart Smith, your *mother* called."

I was determined to enjoy myself, to take part in any activity that interested me. One was the "advanced" drama class. Theater is often a backwater activity in American schools, but at my junior high, the cool crowd vied for admission to this class because it was run by a dashing teacher named Tom Russert. Being admitted to the advanced drama class set up another battle in the war between my self-image and reality. In the end, it was a clear victory for my self-image: I dumped my prosthetic hook for a less practical but far more natural-looking mechanical hand. The decision annoyed the folks at Shriners, but that was of no concern to me. I felt only relief that the hook, and all the stares that came with it, were gone. I felt free to try out for a coveted part in one of Russert's all-school productions: a Jacques Brel musical review (pretty sophisticated stuff for St. Louis county). I won a lead role and had the time of my life working with others. We performed for three nights to packed houses. Unless you were sitting in the front rows, or were watching very carefully, or knew in advance, you would not have noticed my injuries. Of course, virtually everyone in the audience *did* know that I was the kid who was lying in a hospital bed the year before. That's the main reason—though I hope not the only one—why the applause I heard at the end of my solo number was the loudest of the night.

Theater and student government were wonderful areas to succeed in, but the tougher field, the site of my previous glory, was athletics. I wanted back in, bad. The only sport even remotely feasible for me was soccer. Fortunately, I knew the coaches. Chip Miller, an eighth grade teacher and a distant cousin of mine, commanded the second string "B" team; the head of the "A" team was none other than the drama coach Tom Russert. When I announced my intention to try out for the sport, my parents were not exactly overjoyed. Nor was my surgeon. Dr.

poration wants to sell something, it will exploit human weakness and affliction to do so.

Curiously, I often had little problem speaking to other people who stuttered. Another curious experience was that if someone made my stutter an object of conversation—that is, if they brought it out into the open—somehow that would take the pressure off, and the stutter would recede. Talking about talking, I could speak fairly freely.

In my own case, to the extent that I have emerged from this problem, it happened almost incidentally, as I put to rest various inner oppositions and conflicts. Sometime in my teens, I decided that the way to deal with stuttering was to defy it and become a member of the debate team. After that, I pretty much blocked it out. I aspired towards the same kinds of careers as other young people, and thinking myself "a stutterer" was baggage I didn't want.

In elementary school, I got special "speech therapy" for a while. But the drills didn't accomplish much. And being taken out of class—an officially certified problem case—probably did as much harm as good. Once they've fixed the label on you, it can be self-reinforcing in all sorts of subtle ways. On the whole, however, my life was happily free of therapy. I am forever indebted to those teachers who found tactful ways to relieve me of my distress. Instead of going around the table in reading group, for example, calling on people at random. That way, in being skipped over, I would not appear an obvious charity case.

I craved nothing more than to be treated as normal, and people with other forms of impediment have told me they feel this way as well. They want to be part—however awkwardly—of the normal flow of life.

About 12 years ago, someone formed an organization called the "National Stutterers Project." In the words of *Time* magazine, the organization regarded the nation's stutterers as "another oppressed minority" and hoped "to weld them into a potent lobbying group." If it helps some people deal with their speaking problem, I have no quarrel with it whatsoever. But I don't think I would have joined. I sensed that I did not want this problem to become my identity.

The idea of a stutterers lobby gives me pause for another reason. The world of therapy has come to mimic the market segmentation of the magazine rack and of the Washington PAC bazaar. People cordon themselves off into ever-multiplying ghettos of affliction. Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, has inspired a legion of counterparts dealing with everything from drug addiction to overeating. Which is understandable at one level. Who's going to confront the president of the Coca-Cola Co. if not an organization of stutterers themselves? But somehow, the goal should be to find what connects individuals with various problems, not what sets them apart.

And wouldn't it be refreshing if someone besides stutterers were to express outrage to the chief of Coke? □

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It seemed the whole point of Shriners was to get kids used to the idea of being handicapped—a process I found myself resisting with all my might.

Monafo just cringed and laughed nervously and shook his head. He had visions of my left forearm snapping like a twig or my intestines spilling out all over the frozen field. But I was insistent, and he and my parents reluctantly complied. I agreed to wear protective gear and to play only half the season, after which I was scheduled to be back in the hospital for more reconstructive surgery.

I enjoyed every moment of my half-season on Chip Miller's "B" team. But I did feel the effects of the burns. With so much muscle missing from my left side, my left leg didn't have much kick in it. Making the "A" team seemed out of the question. Then one day, two weeks before my scheduled hospital visit, I found myself practicing with the "A" team. A week later, I was in the starting lineup for a big game. My performance in that game—a couple of fine corner kicks and no major mistakes—was good enough to support the fiction that I deserved the slot. But I knew I was there because my coaches combined a little nepotism with a dash of affirmative action.

Special treatment like that, as long as it wasn't too overt, didn't bother me. I accepted the small favors—extra time to finish the cumbersome task of writing exams and papers, for instance—in the level-the-playing-field spirit in which they were usually offered. The favors gave me what I wanted: the opportunity to participate in the normal life of the school and to feel like the normal kid I knew myself to be.

Which is why it was so insufferable when the inevitable accolades started to fly about my having "overcome" my "handicap." One day the principal called the whole school together for a speech on "true heroes" and the "hero" turned out to be me. I shrank in my chair. When the archbishop came to our church one Sunday and made me the subject of his sermon—his deep voice, with its refined Greek accent, repeating my name—I felt my soul crawling under the pews and heading towards the door. If someone chose to compliment me on my acting genius, or my political savvy, or my athletic agility, I was delighted to accept. I hungered for appreciation of my talents as much as anyone. But this was different. I was becoming everyone's example of the indomitable human spirit, and I hated it. The adults—it was always adults—who came up to me and expressed their sincere pride in the way I'd "overcome" my "handicap" didn't mean to embarrass me. They couldn't have known that I had not mentally incorporated those words into my identity, that my mind was busy building the self-image of a totally normal kid, and that those dreaded words were like floodlights turned on my injuries.

Ozark mountain boy

In TV movies about the disabled, there is always a scene where the protagonist finally succeeds at a feat he thought impossible and erupts into hugs and tears with the therapist who never lost faith. Sorry, folks; maybe I'm different, but to me the process of learning new ways to cope with the physical world contained all the emotional and dramatic intensity of a handyman fixing a toaster. One steadily, incrementally, figures out how to do things. I could usually tell—even if others could not—which tasks were beyond my abilities and which I could expect to master. I would proceed toward the latter with the relaxed singlemindedness of someone who doesn't have doubts about the outcome. We're talking pretty basic stuff here, stuff I was used to doing myself: opening doors, zipping trousers, eating, writing, picking up objects off the floor. As I conquered all these tasks, I never experienced a feeling of triumph, merely relief.

Occupational therapists remained quietly disappointed at my refusal to use my prosthetic arm for much of anything beyond decoration, but I was convinced the device *was* largely useless. My other hand, on the other hand, seemed to me much more

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promising, even though it had no working nerves, almost no movement, and fingers frozen in place by metal pins in the knuckles. I was forever being offered ideas for gizmos that could be strapped onto my hand, or modifications that could be made to clothing, pencils, forks, and other artifacts of daily life. But I accepted only a few, and even those I usually had to design myself. My strategy was minimalist. I wanted to be able to move around the world freely, not be limited in range by a dependency on doodads and modifications that wouldn't always be there.

This strategy was not foolproof; some aspects of the world took longer to adapt to than others. Smooth door knobs, for instance. I'd often fumble with certain knobs at school for a minute or so before they'd turn. Sometimes they wouldn't turn at all. So I'd lean against a nearby wall and try to look nonchalant. When someone would eventually come through the door, I'd sneak through after them.

I wasn't so self-conscious that I couldn't ask for help now and then, especially from my friends. (They would often figure out what was needed before I'd have to ask.) But I tended to avoid situations where I felt too dependent, such as the lunch room. The physical tasks (securing a tray full of food, getting money out of my pocket) combined with the social pressures (who do I sit by?) seemed not worth the effort. So that last year of junior high, and for the next three years in high school, I spent my lunch hours in the library. I had never been a great reader, and during all those lunch hours in the library I never read a book through to the end. Rather, I'd flip through books, hundreds of them, concentrating on the sciences and natural history. A few pages, a paragraph, even a photo would usually be enough to send my mind off into a daydream.

I was finding that with my injuries came a certain separation from physical surroundings. Quite literally, I no longer felt anything when I touched it with my fingers. I fought this tendency, this separation, but it was an existential fact, and it had its effects. More and more, I found that I was living in my mind. And enjoying it. One of the keys to living well with physical affliction, I think, is the ability to be delighted in the company of one's own thoughts. Those physical activities I could still do became special, and I experienced them more mentally than before. I was not asked to do housework; indeed, my mother, not wanting to produce sibling friction, wound up taking more of the load herself than she ever intended. But I could still mow the lawn, and a dreaded Saturday ritual became enjoyable. I liked the exertion, the sweat, the smell of the cut grass, and the chance to daydream. (Pushing the mower was one thing my prosthetic arm was good for.) My brothers and I always had summer jobs working for my father's advertising agency. But while my brothers handled the office machines, I became the copywriter, working up radio ads for restaurants and car dealers.

There's a harmful side to all this group consciousness. For the individual to identify with his handicap can be insidious.

The tendency to turn inward also changed my high school life. Experience told me that I could not play soccer well enough to compete at the high school level. So while my athlete friends spent their afternoons on the field or in the gym, I was out in the woods, sometimes with Dave, sometimes by myself, identifying plants with Peterson's Field Guide. A high school fellow without a sport can maintain his social place only with great effort, and I was losing my taste for the struggle. I began hanging around a more thoughtful set of friends, people who felt a certain alienation from high school. A B-minus kind of guy up until then, I started taking advanced placement courses and actually doing homework. My grades soared.

But while I willfully lashed myself to books, my thoughts often dwelt on the one thing that offered more immediate liberation: a driver's license. It was not clear to everyone that driving was in the cards for me. I had some small doubt myself, and so ran the idea past a friend who had wisdom and ex-

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perience in these matters: at 15 he had been arrested for smashing his father's car into a tree. "No fuckin' problem," he advised. He insisted I forget about the driver education films that caution that one must steer with both hands: "I cruise with one thumb on the bottom of the fuckin' wheel." That removed any trace of doubt. Soon, I was out in an empty parking lot with my father, behind the wheel of his Matador station wagon. Earlier I stated that my efforts to cope with new tasks were never dramatic, but I must make one small exception. There was a moment when the Matador was headed at moderate speed toward a brick wall, and my father was not fully convinced that I would make the turn. But I did, and he let go of the dashboard. Soon, I had a license in my pocket, and the Matador was taking my friends and me on backpacking trips in the Ozark mountains, for late night coffee at the local Denny's, and to triple features at the I-44 Drive-In—where, sitting on the hood, drinking beer and smoking dope, I would feel grateful that my father had shown such faith in me.

He and my mother continued to show faith, even when senior year rolled around and I shared my desire to go away to school. They gently raised the obvious concerns, but only once, and I brushed them off. Like any normal high school senior, I wanted to get the hell out of town. I saw no reason to fret about potential future problems, in part because the present was terrific. It was another Year of Overachievement. My continuing involvement in drama was paying off: I played the lead in one production, and directed another. My time in the woods paid off: I won a St. Louis Science Fair trophy for an ecological experiment I conducted. My summer career as a copywriter bore fruit: I wrote and delivered the winning speech in the competition for commencement speaker. And I was especially pleased with the outcome of the final battle over my self-image: her name was Lynn, and she was smart, blond, and beautiful.

A democratic dashboard

Of all the common words borrowed from psychology, few have such negative connotations as "denial." It suggests self-delusion, self-repudiation, pathological dishonesty—conditions best treated by confrontation, by rubbing the victim's nose in the ugly reality, for his own good. But is it possible that denial can sometimes be a good thing? And that "treating" the condition by "confronting" it might sometimes be a bad thing? I obviously think so. A trick of the mind that is some variation of denial has allowed me to live quite successfully and happily for 15 years.

The denial is easier for me, I suspect, than for those who first meet me. I see the look on a person's face when he offers to shake hands and get in return something stiff and scarred. So what is one supposed to do in that situation? What I try to do is draw the person's attention away from the affliction and towards whatever we're talking about. I don't use funny one-liners to put people at ease; that requires too much self-consciousness. I don't offer to explain how I got injured, not the first time I meet someone, or the second time, or the third time, unless they ask. I've known people so polite they went years without asking. It's not as if I mind telling the story; I don't. (I'm certainly telling it at great length here.) But in my day-to-day living I don't want an issue made of something I prefer to ignore.

Sometimes that means accepting the fact that the rest of the world doesn't always want to play my game. People are curious, they want to help, and to refuse them is to make an even bigger issue out of it. I find it sad the way others with physical afflictions sometimes snap at passersby who try to lend a hand. It's an inappropriate use of pride. Every day strangers offer me unsolicited assistance. If I don't want help, I casually say, "No thanks, I've got it." If they insist, I accept with a thank-you that is only partially insincere. They're just trying to be nice, for chrissakes. When I really do need help, I try to ask in a got-a-match tone of voice. Nice and easy. No fuss. And it works. People actually seem to enjoy helping. I'm their good deed for the day. With the assistance of this civil infrastructure I can go anywhere and do as I please. I've seen most of the U.S. and traveled on my own in foreign countries without feeling insecure. All this politeness has no doubt warped my view of humanity into a rosier one than is probably warranted. But the fact is people almost never turn me down.

Even my family and friends have a hard time controlling their urge to help. I remember being at a bar with a friend in college who insisted that I could play pool with him. My protests went unheeded as he pulled a knife from his pocket and fashioned an ingenious device out of a plastic beer cup. With the device I could support the cue tip in my prosthetic hand, my other hand holding the butt end of the cue with the aid of my friend's shoe string. The get-up worked, sort of. At a party a while back, my wife, Kukula, and I met another old friend of mine, a person who on previous occasions had struck Kukula as cold and insensitive. But as she watched, my friend reached for an hors d'oeuvre I'd been fumbling with and tenderly popped it into my mouth. My wife's heart melted. She too has had to learn to hold

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back, though in certain areas she refuses. I'm not a bad cook, for instance, and I rather enjoy it, but the sight of me chopping onions with a paring knife in my mouth is more that she can take. She prefers that I "supervise" while sitting in the "husband's chair."

Denial has been my strength, but it masks a weakness. I live happily with injuries that would make most people wince, yet I wince when confronted with those dreaded words: "disabled," "crippled," "handicapped." A whole movement has sprung up to defend and advance the cause of people like me, yet whenever I see the movement coming, I run the other way. Except once. In high school I accepted an invitation to join a support group of former burn-unit patients to counsel others who were still in the unit but having a tough time. In my role as counselor, I sat in the unit with a deeply depressed middle-aged laborer whose burns might or might not have threatened his livelihood. I left after our half-hour chat and never went back, convinced that I had nothing to offer a guy so caught up in self-destructive self-pity. In fact, he needed precisely the kind of help I had to give. I was simply afraid of the role I was playing, afraid of being associated with someone who was beginning to think of himself as disabled, afraid of what would happen to my carefully crafted identity as a Totally Normal Guy.

That fear of associating with disability is the dark side of my denial. But the disability movement shows a dark side, too, when it perpetuates that fear and fails to recognize the healthy side of denial.

A few years ago I found myself in Washington D.C. traffic court with an embarrassingly large debt of parking tickets. Someone had told me that one could get out of paying them just by showing up and pleading guilty. So there I stood, in line with everyone else: lawyers, truck drivers, housewives. (There's something democratic about traffic court, though one can experience the same thing a lot more comfortably at a baseball stadium.) When my turn came, I handed my forms over to the bailiff. Noticing my injuries, the judge informed me that I could avoid receiving such tickets in the future by displaying on my dashboard a handicapped parking permit, forms for which were available in a room down the hall. I thanked His Honor, and responded that I knew about these permits but felt uncomfortable displaying them. The judge said he understood my discomfort, but that if I chose not to utilize my right to display the sticker, he was under no obligation to dismiss the charges this time, or next time. I thanked the judge again and pulled out my checkbook. He had made the right decision. So had I. □

WHO'S WHO

Edward Kennedy's praise of **Dan Quayle** during this fall's presidential campaign, as well as the warm support of the Republican ticket by **Kurt Waldheim**'s dear friend, **Mr. Maria Shriver**, awakened Democratic memories of Kennedy's humiliation of **Jimmy Carter** at the 1980 convention and may mean some unpleasant surprises for the Kennedy family when it next assumes the automatic support of party loyalists. . . .

A couple of facts about **John Sununu** awaken liberal anxieties: (1) he is an ardent advocate of nuclear power who screamed at moderate opponents of the Seabrook plant; (2) he is a tax refugee from Massachusetts who won election on a no-tax pledge. . . .

One member of the Bush transition team is none other than **Fred F. "White Gloves" Fielding**. Veteran readers of "Who's Who" will recall that Fielding earned his sobriquet when he used the gloves to open **Howard Hunt**'s White House safe during Watergate. His escape from indictment is regarded as a modern-day miracle by Watergate scholars except, of course, for those who believe that he played Deep Throat for the prosecutors as well as for **Woodward** and **Bernstein**. He was also a prime source for the leaks about **Michael Deaver** and **Nancy Reagan** during his later service in the Reagan administration. . . .

There is concern in Washington that **Alan Greenspan** sees himself as the new **Paul Volker** and that he may seriously damage the economy by using high interest rates to fight an inflation threat that is, at best, faint. . . .

People who know the records of **Tom Kean** and **Lamar Alexander** are hoping that one of them will be named secretary of education. Each acted courageously and imaginatively to deal with the problems of the public schools. . . .

In—*White House:* Domestic Policy Adviser—**Franmarie Kennedy-Keel.** Executive Secretary, Economic Policy Council—**William J. Maroni.** Executive Secretary, Domestic Policy Council—**Juanita Donaghey Duggan.** *Health and Human Services:* Deputy Director, National Institute on Aging—**Gene D. Cohen.** *Labor:* Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs—**Francis J. Duggan.**

Out—*White House:* Domestic Policy Adviser—**Gary Bauer.** *Health and Human Services:* Deputy Director, National Institute on Aging—**Edward L. Schneider.** *Labor:* Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs—**William J. Maroni.**

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by John Murphy

Fiasco Alfresco

How Washington's greedy restaurant owners managed to shack up

Over the decades, the Europeans have given us lots of stuff we'd be better off without. Like World War I. Or phony Oxbridge accents. Like Fellini. Like Princess Di. But one export worthy of our gratitude is the outdoor cafe. As any owner of a Eurail pass can attest, outdoor cafes are one of the small but transforming pleasures that give cities life. They soften urban edges. They make the streets warmer and faces friendlier.

S.J. Rausser

But the outdoor cafes in Washington, D.C., are falling prey to what might be called the greenhouse effect: glass and awning enclosures that more and more restaurants use to cover their sidewalk extensions. These plywood, steel, and smoked glass contraptions squeeze the sidewalk, wringing life from the curbsides they're supposed to invigorate. The city's cafes are looking increasingly less like the Paris that Washington's visionary planner, Pierre L'Enfant, imagined, and more and more like mini-malls.

What's worse, taxpayers subsidize these glassed-in hovels by offering restaurants public space at fire-sale prices. At the same time, a city law meant to promote legitimate outdoor cafes has backfired and shut some of them down. This has been the case particularly in the newly developed stretch of historic Pennsylvania Avenue, where a cluster of cafes might bring some romance to the canyon of Marriotts and anonymous office buildings.

How did the nation's capital exchange a forest of Cinzano parasols for a jumble of plywood shanties? Chalk it up to a weak city council. An incompetent city bureaucracy. And greedy restaurant owners, grabbing public space to peddle their grilled trout in year-round, climate-controlled, fluorescent-lit comfort.

The Astrodomization of Washington's sidewalk cafes may not rank as one of the great urban crises of our time. (Washington still has more open cafes than enclosed ones.) But it's a loss nonetheless. It's another of countless examples of public property be-

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ing appropriated for private gain, another time when the touches that really could have made us a kinder, gentler nation got razed.

Curbside convertibles

While Parisians have enjoyed sidewalk cafes since they first enjoyed sidewalks (in the 1850s), Washingtonians had to wait until 1961 to get theirs. The thirst began during the European vacation boom of the 1950s. Millions of middle-class Americans, riding the wave of postwar prosperity, sauntered through Europe on their first visit as tourists. As the charms of sidewalk schmoozing took hold, Washingtonians wanted cafes to call their own. (And they desperately needed something to add life to the city's nighttime sterility.) What they got was Bassin's, an outdoor eatery that brought new meaning to the word generic. While its Pennsylvania Avenue patrons were in no danger of thinking they were on the Champs Elysees, at least they were, finally, outdoors.

But the cafe caught city bureaucrats by surprise. Hey, they said, this restaurant's setting up tables on our sidewalk—what do we do? Legally, a restaurant had as much right to expand onto the sidewalk as a shoe store had to rope off the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. But the city recognized that, unlike loafers on Lincoln, cafes on the corner have cachet. The city passed a law establishing its jurisdiction over the sidewalks and set modest rental rates for use of sidewalk space. The city got its rent, the cafes got their sidewalks, and Washingtonians got more interesting and pleasant streets. By 1977, the city had about 100 outdoor cafes.

That's when trouble arose in Eden. The Paradise Cafe decided that cheap sidewalk space was too good to leave to the summer months. Why not enclose it and boost profits year-round? So up went a plywood shack with plexiglass windows, jutting out toward the street. Now they could air-condition it in the summer. They could heat it in the winter. They could commandeer that sidewalk space come rain or shine. As for the shine, the sun and breezes that were part of the original cafe allure. . .well, if you want nature, take a hike.

This tumorous growth bore about as much relation to an outdoor cafe as a tanning parlor does to Palm Beach. Outraged, the city took the restaurant to court—and lost. A municipal judge ruled that the existing cafe law, which made no mention of enclosures at all, was too vague to be enforced. Vindicated, the restaurant, now known as Rumors, continues to run its mall-like "cafe."

And the bad idea took root. Rival restaurateurs, watching Rumors rake it in, decided not to be left out (literally) in the cold. Up sprang more shacks on public sidewalks. Down went the delightful vision of an open, breathing city.

And in stepped the city council to make things worse. After watching cafes shack up for four years, Councilmember David Clarke tried to establish some guidelines. But he wasn't savvy enough to beat back the greedy restaurant owners. The council should have barred any enclosed structure on public sidewalks, period. "Restaurant owners," Clarke should have said, "read my lips: *No* enclosed cafes."

Instead, the law was hopelessly moderate. Trying to let restaurants have it both ways, the law envisioned the cafe equivalent of the convertible—a flimsy structure that could be thrown open for the sunshine and sealed off on inclement days. The enclosures are supposed to have no internal plumbing or food storage facilities and be removable within 24 hours' notice. They're supposed to be enclosed only during the winter (October 15 to May 15). Or during the summer if the temperature goes above 90 or below 60 degrees. Or if it rains. Or "if the National Weather Service predicts. . .the chance of rain is 50 percent or more." In other words, the holes in the law are big enough to drive a sidewalk cafe through. And over the objections of Clarke, the council added a grandfather clause that made legal the Rumors tumor and its imitators.

The restaurants had as much right to seize the sidewalk as a shoe store had to rope off the Lincoln Memorial.

This reform effort has wiped out the ugly sidewalk enclosures about as well as AFDC has wiped out poverty. Of the 24 enclosed cafes in the city, 15 broke ground *after* the new law was passed. The city's Public Space Committee, which has final approval over cafe permits, has taken a, let's say, liberal view of the regulations. Presumably the House of Hunan's expansion onto the K Street sidewalk fits the com-

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mittee's vision of cafe dining: stucco walls, air-conditioning, wall-to-wall carpeting, and windows that don't open. Collapsible within 24 hours' notice? Sure, with the help of the Redskins' offensive line. "It is designed—even though it looks permanent—so that it could be unbolted and removed if it had to be," said David Kessler, a member of the Public Space Committee. Ironically, K Street, packed with the city's top law firms, is one place that probably should have no cafes at all: the crowded sidewalks are just too narrow. Now, passersby squeeze into the few feet of remaining sidewalk space while the city's powerlawyers scarf platefuls of $12.50 Hunan Lamb (or $24.95 Peking Duck for the big spenders) in sealed-off splendor. Ahh—springtime in D.C.!

The $49,000 sidewalk

The weather decrees get enforced about as well as the 24-hour rule. Technically, it's illegal for the cafes to stay shuttered when the temperature is between 60 and 90 degrees on rain-free days. But Kessler, the chief of public space, doesn't have his inspector check the windows. "It's very hard to enforce," Kessler said. "It's based on the merit system—we expect the owners of the adjacent shops if it's a nice day to say, 'Hey, open up your windows.'" But it's not hard to enforce at all. It simply takes a car, a thermometer, and a map. A *Washington Monthly* staff member tackled the course in midday traffic and checked all 24 enclosed cafes. Time? One hour, 59 minutes.

The city has encouraged these sidewalk intrusions not just through lax regulation but also, in some cases, through bargain-basement prices. The city set up a capricious pricing scheme that links the rent paid by sidewalk cafes to the value of the adjacent property and building. That means if the restaurant happens to be attached to a high-rise office tower, its rates will be sizable. Another cafe on the same block that juts out from a slummy townhouse, pays less for its patch of sidewalk. So while rent for an average downtown restaurant runs from $25 to $40 per square foot, Luigi's, a 19th street Italian cafe attached to a nothing-special building, gets its sidewalk annexation for only $7 per square foot. In the heart of Georgetown, perhaps the city's most coveted real estate, Au Pied de Cochon, a self-styled Parisian bistro, slapped on an extension that looks more like a terrarium than a cafe. Cost? Despite Georgetown's elan, zoning laws keep the building heights low and they are therefore worth less than downtown office towers. So Au Pied de Cochon got its extension for about $7.50 per square foot—the price of a modest shag carpet. Thankfully, Rumors, which provoked this law, is one of the few restaurants being taxed at a sensible rate, paying about $37 a square foot.

The law has also backfired not only by increasing the number of enclosed cafes, but by deterring the open air cafes it tried to promote. By tying rental prices to the value of adjoining land and buildings, the law has made it prohibitive for many of the city's best hotels and restaurants to open outdoor cafes. Often, it's just too expensive.

This is especially true on the recently redeveloped section of Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House. Its wide stretches of new sidewalks and miniature plazas are ready-made for outdoor cafes, where they could be easily reached by the city's huge tourist population. Cafes could help create a nightlife in the revamped neighborhood. So it's no wonder that officials of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, the federal agency overseeing the project, have urged hotel owners to open them.

But the hotels say the city rents are just too high. Muneer Deen, general manager of the Hotel Washington at 15th and Pennsylvania, said the hotel planned to put tables on the sidewalk until the city sent a $49,000 bill for seven months' sidewalk rent. So much for the Cafe d'Hotel Washington. Other top downtown hotels have run into the same problem. "With city-owned property, you just can't afford to do business," said Phillip Carr of the Oliver T. Carr Company, which owns the Willard Hotel at 14th and Pennsylvania.

The city's Office of Planning in June came to the same conclusion—that the law was keeping sidewalk cafes off Pennsylvania Avenue, where everyone wants them. "The calculation of rates is discouraging them in high-value areas," said David Colby, the office's chief of urban design. Colby offers two options: either reduce rents across the board (a fine option, giving even Rumors cheap rent if it shuts the shack and goes straight), or isolate the downtown area and charge a different rate. Colby said he passed the report on to Wylie L. Williams Jr., the deputy mayor for economic development, and, "I haven't heard anything about it since." Cheryl Crowell, acting as spokesperson for Williams's office, said a task force is studying the issue, but "I don't know when they will conclude."

If you're planning a trip to Washington next summer, don't get your hopes up for much outdoor dining. "We've tried to get the executive branch to get off their ass and do something," said George Collier, legislative assistant to Councilmember Betty Ann Kane. "But unless there's a major public outcry, things are going to galumph along the way they are." □

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Raiders of the Lost Arc

How to shoot down an F-16 with a BB gun

by Stan Jones

In 1984, a naval engineer in Norfolk, Virginia, conducted a crude and improbable experiment. In his backyard, he took a handful of electrical wires, strapped them to a piece of metal, energized them with current, and fired BBs at them. The test, while amateurish, had a serious military purpose. The engineer wanted to know if wires like those that make up the delicate nervous system of a U.S. fighter plane could withstand a barrage of enemy gunfire.

It was a sure bet that the enemy wouldn't be using BBs in a dogfight. But BBs were all it took in Norfolk. The tiny pellets, fired from a Daisy air rifle, produced the electrical equivalent of a nervous breakdown. The wires seemed to explode.

The implications of that 1984 experiment began to crystallize a year later, when the tests moved from the back lot to the laboratory and BBs were replaced by .30 caliber bullets. At the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington D.C. and the Naval Air Test Center in Patuxent River, Maryland, technicians found that although one wire type would erupt in a fireworks display of sparks and flame when fired upon, two other types would not. But that was little consolation for the Navy. Kapton, the type of wire used most often in the Navy's hottest frontline fighters—and those of the other service branches as well—was the one given to pyrotechnics.

The Navy's tests are no small matter. Although key components of military aircraft, such as engines, fuel cells, and sophisticated onboard computers, have long been built with an eye toward surviving combat, the electrical wiring that links them has not. Under fire, Kapton wiring is an Achilles' heel in the military's most sophisticated flying fortresses. A single bullet holds the potential to cripple, or even doom, the nation's most formidable fighting aircraft.

And it might not even take a bullet. For reasons still not fully understood, Kapton wires sometimes explode under the routine stress of peacetime flight. Though no deaths have been traced to the wiring, military documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that it has become a suspect in a rash of inflight fires aboard both military and commercial planes as well as aboard the space shuttle *Columbia*. Exploding wires are listed as a possible factor in the crash of a navy jet in 1986 and in at least a dozen other cases in which military aircraft have faced a power loss or fire but managed to land safely. More than 100 other aircraft wire fires, both on and off the ground, have occurred under circumstances that bear striking similarities, military records suggest, but hard evidence to link them to Kapton is lacking.

The Navy has banned Kapton in new planes and in repairs to existing ones. The Army is moving toward a similar ban, and the Air Force has restricted its use. But what about the safety of the aircraft now in service? There are 400,000 miles of Kapton wire stuffed inside navy F-14s and F-18s, air force F-16s and B-1B bombers, army helicopters, and marine corps jump-jets. It is also the most popular wiring in commercial jetliners, and it can be found in intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear power plants.

As early as 1982 the Navy's own safety experts claimed that Kapton fires were endangering its aircraft, but pilots were not warned. When the Naval Air Command moved to ban Kapton beginning in 1984, the pilots were informed but the public was

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kept in the dark. In 1987, when the Kapton controversy finally surfaced in news reports, army and air force spokesmen initially denied that the wiring was even a matter of concern. Military officials continue to drag their heels in finding a fix, even as wire fires account for an increasing number of damaged aircraft.

Limping into Lisbon

Wire types, distinguished by the insulations that cover them, underwent a transformation 20 years ago when Kapton came along. This insulation was thinner, lighter, and in many ways stronger than anything previously made. For its creator, E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company, it became an overnight success story. It fit into the tightest of spaces in fighters, and its low weight saved precious fuel in the highly competitive commercial market. Moreover, DuPont touted Kapton as abrasion- and fire-resistant. And when it did burn, it emitted less smoke than other types—an important consideration for airline passenger compartments. Aircraft manufacturers, both military and civilian, hailed Kapton as a near-perfect insulator, and it became the mainstay of aircraft electrical systems.

But more recently, in tests and in the field, Kapton has been found susceptible to a phenomenon known as "flashover." Worn or otherwise damaged wires can produce an arc—a ribbon of current between exposed wires. Other widely used insulations also produce arcs, but only Kapton carbonizes from the arc's heat, instantly degrading into a charry, graphite-like material that is highly conductive. The char provides a path for the arc to spread to adjacent wires, creating a feeding frenzy of high-voltage arcing and fire that was described, even in the detached vernacular of the Navy's official reports, as "catastrophic." Eugene L. Kelsey, head of the aeronautical engineering branch at NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, likened Kapton to a bomb ticking inside the bellies of countless U.S. aircraft. "Once an arc is applied to it. . . ," he said, "it is a potential small bomb."

DuPont, with annual Kapton sales estimated at more than $100 million, maintains that Kapton outperforms all competitors if properly installed and maintained. The company contends its product has become a scapegoat for fires resulting from sloppy repair work or poor aircraft design. Aircraft manufacturers tend to agree, saying evidence is insufficient to indicate that Kapton is inferior to any other insulation type.

Records show that when Kapton was introduced 20 years ago, it escaped the rigorous government-supervised testing required for other important aircraft materials. Unlike engines, radar, or flight control systems, electrical wiring was not considered a major component. Therefore, although revolutionary in design and untested in the field, Kapton was subjected only to the less-strenuous performance tests set in conjunction with industry representatives. These tests omitted such simple considerations as ease of maintenance, reaction to salt-water exposure, bending, and stress. The military's use of Kapton began in 1970, when the Navy installed it in its C-2 transport aircraft. In the commercial sector, Lockheed began using Kapton in 1972, in its L-1011 jetliners.

Almost as soon as the insulation was put into service, maintenance crews complained that Kapton was brittle and fragile, breaking easily when bent. Trans World Airlines reported 22 instances of wire fires or arcing on its fleet of 30 L-1011 jetliners between 1972 and 1981. The experience with Kapton left such a bad taste that a company official wrote Boeing in 1981 and asked that the insulation not be used on the Boeing 767 jets that TWA was planning to buy. Boeing refused, as have other U.S. aircraft manufacturers, defending Kapton's field performance. TWA bought the planes anyway.

Executives at Petroleum Helicopter Inc., a major Gulf Coast helicopter-leasing company headquartered in Louisiana, became so fed up with Kapton's breakage and corrosion that they lobbied Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. of Fort Worth to eliminate the insulation on business helicopters sold to the company. "If handled with kid gloves in a laboratory environment, fine, but in the real world, where you're jerking engines in and out, . . .you don't have time to be playing games with something tender," said Harold Summers, the leasing company's maintenance vice president. He added that "the problems just almost went away" after Bell switched to an alternative wire made by a DuPont competitor, Raychem Corp. The insulation, known as Spec 55, is slightly heavier than Kapton. Bell officials defend Kapton, and the company continues to use it unless a buyer specifies a different wiring.

The most serious incident involving Kapton and commercial aircraft occurred in January 1985, when a wire fire temporarily knocked out the main power in a Boeing 757 packed with passengers 30,000 feet over the Atlantic. The aircraft, owned by Monarch Airlines of England and enroute from the Canary Islands to Luton, England, made an emergency landing in Lisbon, Portugal, and no injuries were reported. The fire erupted when alkaline toilet fluid leaked onto damaged Kapton wires, causing a flashover fire that destroyed power cables to both aircraft generators. The aircraft landed using backup power.

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The potential for more serious Kapton problems captured the attention of Pete Kochis, a safety official at the Federal Aviation Administration assigned to monitor Kapton complaints. In an August 1986 memo to his superiors, obtained through the FOIA, Kochis wrote "it is conceivable that under the right conditions, this phenomena could impact the FAA in a fashion similar to the 'booster seal' experiences of NASA." It was a faulty O-ring booster seal, of course, that caused the explosion of NASA's space shuttle *Challenger*. A higher FAA official, Leroy Keith, director of aircraft certification, described Kochis's comment as "over dramatic," and said the agency, though actively studying the problem, believes Kapton is safe in commercial aircraft.

The chafe-free video

The military has had far worse problems with Kapton. Military aircraft take more abuse, and the wiring is crammed into smaller spaces, which increases the chances of chafing. The problems first cropped up at sea, in the harsh aircraft-carrier operations of the Navy. For planes, the stress of carrier-deck takeoffs and landings has a bump-and-grind effect, causing the Kapton to rub against clamps and sometimes crack or break. And the salt air tends to degrade Kapton, leading to arcing and flashovers.

Within six to eight years of its introduction, according to navy reports, Kapton had become an ongoing maintenance headache and a potential safety threat. In June 1981, Rear Admiral Virgil Moore, then commander of the Navy's Pacific flight operations, wrote, "The incidence of wire chafing, recurring inspections, and fire hazards grows directly with the number of aircraft with Kapton wiring." The Navy Safety Center in Norfolk, which monitors accident reports, announced in 1982 that 25 fires had broken out on F-4 and RF-4 aircraft since 1979, four of them in the cockpits during flight. In messages to navy brass, the safety center concluded that repeated mishaps were "not a problem until Kapton wire was introduced in 1979."

Nevertheless, navy aeronautical engineers tended to discount these early warnings, contending that sloppy maintenance and poor aircraft design were responsible for the problems, rather than the type of insulation used. A Pentagon group assembled at the Navy's request in 1982 to review Kapton problems reached a similar conclusion. The experts found it difficult to believe that any insulation could be reponsible for so many problems, several of them said recently. At the time, they said, they never would have believed that Kapton could explode. Quick fixes, such as rerouting wires, adding extra layers of insulation, and tutoring sailors on handling Kapton with more care, became the prescription of choice.

But fires continued to plague the fleet. The Navy's Air Logistics Center in Washington noted in 1982 that just as field engineers got a handle on one nagging problem, a new one would surface. "Evidence supports the Kapton wire as [a] contributing factor," the center argued in a communique to navy headquarters. "Intensified effort corrects existing failure but chafing fires occur in different areas."

The Air Force also looked for shortcuts to fix its wiring problems. Plagued by electrical fires in its frontline F-16 fighters, which contain ten miles of Kapton each, the service argued that better installation and maintenance was the key. In 1982 it undertook an $89 million revamping of the F-16's electrical system—a project given the rip-roaring name "Falcon Rally"—rerouting and reinforcing dozens of wire bundles. The Air Force formed special "chafing awareness teams," produced a video to alert crews to the dangers of chafing, and enacted 60 chafe-preventing changes in engineering.

Nevertheless, the most recent F-16 wiring study, completed by the Air Force in September 1986, found that while many of the chafing problems plaguing older F-16s had been fixed, they were resurfacing in newer planes. Fires continued to occur even on newly routed and better protected wires. Earlier this year, one air force base temporarily stopped washing its F-16s because the solvents were eating at the Kapton and starting fires as the jets prepared for takeoff. Reports from air force bases on the F-16 alone contain references to almost 50 electrical fires, both on the ground and in flight, between 1978 and 1986.

The $3 billion bill

The Air Force position is indicative of a stubborn resistance throughout the military, the FAA, NASA, and the aviation industry to publicly acknowledge the blotches on Kapton's report card. Even the Navy, which was the first to suspect a correlation between wire fires and Kapton, the first to document flashover in the laboratory, and the first to move toward a ban, won't acknowledge Kapton fires as a safety hazard.

While acknowledging that "we have had damaged airplanes" due to Kapton flashovers, David Pielmeier, the Navy's top wiring engineer, said the service banned it in new planes because of concerns it would explode in combat, not in peacetime use. With design changes, Pielmeier said, the potential for flashover fires during routine flight falls within "an acceptable envelope of risk."

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To acknowledge Kapton as unsafe would be an admission by the service that most of its aircraft are unsafe—and therefore should be grounded. A similar admission by aircraft builders would invite hundreds of lawsuits.

It would also be expensive. The Navy has estimated that rewiring its fleet of 3,000 fighter planes alone would cost at least $3 billion. The estimate does not include another 2,000 nontactical navy aircraft, the 7,200 air force planes, or the 8,500 active army helicopters.

Instead, the military services and industry have embarked on a gradual course of change. They are rewriting wiring specifications to include flashover and ballistics tests. The Army has already outlawed Kapton for its next generation helicopter, dubbed LHX, and the Navy has done so for its secret new attack plane. Military sources say the Air Force is also planning a Kapton ban for its classified new Advanced Tactical Fighter.

But this inching forward could easily turn into a backslide. Top air force officials, faced with tremendous space constraints in the small, single-engine F-16s, have argued to defense procurement officials that no other insulation is compact enough to replace Kapton. Military sources say the Air Force will seek a waiver from the Pentagon to allow continued Kapton use in the 180 new F-16s that annually roll off the General Dynamics assembly line in Fort Worth. It's easy to see how such a waiver could spread.

Meanwhile, with enough Kapton in military aircraft alone to circle the world 13 times, critics contend that the potential for accidents is high. Classified navy documents show that a navy EA-6B jet plunged into the sea off the California coast on June 27, 1986. Two navy pilots ejected safely after a fire developed in the rear equipment compartment. The investigation found that a bundle of Kapton wires had arced and burned and that a nearby metal tank of highly flammable liquid oxygen had ruptured. The chief investigator cited a "catastrophic failure of aircraft wiring" as a possible cause. The final navy report said the crash was caused by either a wiring failure or a rupture of the tank.

That same year, a frustrated navy squadron chief gave an aviator's perspective on the Kapton issue after an inflight fire forced an emergency landing by an AV-8B Harrier jump-jet. "A potential exists," the officer said in a report to his superiors, "with the subsequent shorting of the [Kapton] wires, for a future airborne, ground-refueling, or maintenance-related accident to occur at any time if this problem is not rectified."

Military experts studying the problem say the question isn't whether such an accident will occur, but when. □

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for September 1988 is presented to

Cindy Ehrlich
California Magazine

Halcion is the most widely prescribed sleeping pill in the country, a $265 million-a-year product that is now more popular than Valium. In this gruesome account, Ehrlich combines first-person experience and investigative reporting to describe how thousands of users (including herself) have experienced adverse side effects. (Reports of hallucinations and paranoia were so widespread that the Netherlands banned the drug in 1979.) Among the culprits in Ehrlich's story are the Food and Drug Administration, which belatedly recommended smaller doses of the drug, and the many physicians, including her own, who either have failed to recognize adverse side effects caused by Halcion or do recognize them and simply don't bother to report them to the FDA.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for stories published or aired in October will be announced in the January issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in November will close December 15. The winner will be announced in the February issue. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

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HOW DUKAKIS CAN STILL BE PRESIDENT

And you thought Dan Quayle was next in line

by Stephen Bates

It might seem that all is lost for the Dukakis campaign. But there's still a way Sasso & Co. could see their man in the White House.

Assume, as CNN's Bernard Shaw said in the final presidential debate, that George Bush dies before inauguration day. Who would take the oath of office on January 20? Probably Dan Quayle, as Shaw said, but not necessarily. Maybe Bob Dole or another Republican. Conceivably even the Duke. The answer lies in the crevices of the Constitution.

At first reading, a clause of the 20th Amendment seems to be the last word: "If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the president, the president-elect shall have died, the vice president-elect shall become president."

But look again. The amendment cannot apply until there's a president-elect—and that's the catch. Shaw spoke of Bush as becoming "president-elect" as soon as the polls closed on November 8. Constitutionally he jumped the gun by more than a month. Until December 19, when members of the electoral college meet in the capitols of their states to cast separate ballots for president and vice president, Bush is just a candidate. And even after that he may still be just a candidate. Some say he doesn't become the official president-elect until January 6, when Congress counts the electoral college ballots.

Consequently, much depends on when Bush dies. If he goes before December 19, the 20th Amendment would not apply. Instead, the Republican National Committee could select a new nominee, as its rules provide. (The Democrats have similar provisions.) Republican electors' pledges would shift from Bush to the new nominee, perhaps primary runner-up Bob Dole. Or the RNC could let things be, assuming that GOP electors would vote for the late Bush and under the 20th Amendment Quayle would become president-elect.

Stephen Bates is a visiting scholar at Harvard Law School.

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But let's suppose the electors are less than delighted by the idea of Dan Quayle as Commander in Chief. Although electors are pledged to abide by the popular vote in the state, only a handful of states provide criminal penalties for violators. Just eight electors out of more than 16,000 have ever broken their pledges. But the prospect of Quayle in the Oval Office might make party faithful think hard before casting their ballot.

If Bush dies, it's not hard to picture electors—Republicans and Democrats alike—conferring privately before December 19 to settle on a new candidate. They would not be completely unconstrained. Congress has the statutory option to reject any electoral vote that is not "regularly given," and nobody knows what that means. To be safe, the electors would have an incentive to rally behind someone popular in Congress. Someone like, say, Minority Leader Dole.

But suppose Bush buys it on Christmas Eve; while he's decorating the tree, a shock turns his body into a thousand points of light. In the period between December 19, when the electors vote, but before January 6, when Congress counts the electors' ballots, the succession issue is more complicated. The outcome would hinge on a crucial question: Who has the power to create a president-elect, the electors or Congress?

The case for a December 19 president-elect rests on the argument that Congress's counting task is inconsequential. The electors do the picking and Congress rubber-stamps their choice. This was the view of the congressmen who wrote the 20th Amendment. If it prevailed, the 20th Amendment would apply and J. Danforth Quayle would become president-elect.

But there's a strong case to be made that Congress creates the president-elect on January 6. According to this argument, the framers of Article II and of the 12th Amendment (which set out the process for electing a president) gave Congress a quasi-judicial checking function, ensuring that electoral ballots are valid. Congress played a decisive role once. In the 1876 presidential election four states sent dual sets of electoral ballots, and the outcome turned on which sets were legitimate. Congress decided the issue (albeit by passing the buck to a special commission) and gave the presidency to Rutherford B. Hayes. Although Congress subsequently delegated some of this confirmation task to the states, the ultimate responsibility seems to remain with Congress. Walter Berns, a constitutional scholar who has written a book on these nuances, believes that no president-elect exists until Congress has done its job.

If Berns is right, Michael Dukakis still has a chance. Congress could choose to reject votes for the late George Bush. There's even an argument that they would constitutionally be forbidden from announcing a dead president-elect. It doesn't take a liberal judicial activist to see that the constitutional requirements for the presidency—natural-born citizen, age 35 or over, at least 14 years a resident of the United States—could reasonably be interpreted to require a pulse.

If Congress couldn't certify votes for Bush, then the presidential choice would fall to the House of Representatives. Under the 12th Amendment, if no candidate receives a majority of electoral votes, the House must "immediately" select the president-elect from the top three finishers in the electoral college. But with a dead Bush out of the running, and with no electoral votes for minor-party candidates, the House would be left with one choice: Michael Dukakis.

The 20th Amendment allows Congress to pass a law for this contingency—for instance, a way to generate a new candidate to replace a dead one—but Congress has never gotten around to it, and it's doubtful whether Jim Wright would be in a rush to sponsor one. Even if Congress hurriedly gave the House a Republican alternative, Dukakis theoretically could still end up in the Oval Office. When the House chooses a president, each state's delegation gets one vote, with a majority of votes (26) required to win. If the members voted strictly by party (they probably wouldn't), Dukakis would become president-elect.

During this time, Quayle presumably would be the vice president-elect, his electoral votes having raised no problems in Congress. If the House were still trying to settle on a president-elect on January 20, Quayle would take office until the members reached a decision. The House might put the matter aside and let Quayle hold the office so long as he behaved himself. It would be the ultimate bargaining chip.

George Bush, of course, is about as healthy a 64-year-old as you can find. But he is 64 and presidents do have a way of dying. In light of how three recent presidents were elevated to the White House—Truman, Johnson, and Ford—it's not impossible to imagine a constitutional skirmish between now and inauguration day. If that happened, the final decision would lie with the judiciary.

A congressional committee declared in 1882 that "a hundred years may pass without the necessity of a resort to the courts in a presidential election." Time's up. For the next few weeks, Dan Quayle and the presidency are separated not only by a heartbeat, but also by a lawsuit. □

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The Powers That Be
Lobbying

One special interest the press doesn't cover: itself

by Sheila Kaplan

It usually doesn't take much to get a bill introduced in Congress. This past session alone brought proposals to establish Snow White Day, protect kangaroos, and bestow tax breaks on imported cantaloupes. But amid the frivolity, lawmakers never quite found time to consider a slightly riskier proposition: a plan to limit the number of newspapers that media conglomerates can control. Each year, the idea gets pushed by critics concerned about the increasingly concentrated ownership of the press. And each year, the notion gets about as far as, say, a plan to recall every hand gun in America. This year, Rep. Edward Feighan, an Ohio Democrat, actually owned up to "thinking about" introducing a bill. But that's all he's done.

Why the skittishness? Credit one of Washington's most powerful lobbies and one that typically escapes the press's notice: the press itself. Washington's media lobby—broadcasters, publishers, and their trade organizations—has the distinction of being perhaps the most formidable and invisible lobby around. And as the stillborn chain-ownership bill shows, it usually gets what it wants.

How? The media exercises part of its clout in the usual way—giving out donations and honoraria, schmoozing with legislators at resort hot spots. But unlike lobbyists pushing guns or butter, sugar or insurance, the media is its own secret weapon. Every congressman has hometown television stations—and, perhaps even more important, a hometown newspaper that endorses politicians—and none of them wants to anger the people who carry them to the public. The media lobbyist, of course, need never be so vulgar as to raise the specter of editorial retaliation. Even the dullest congressman can catch on to that possibility. "The clout that the newspapers and broadcasters exert is the desire of every elected official to have favorable press attention," says Lionel Van Deerlin, who served as a California representative from 1953-81. "When you hear from these guys, you listen."

So what does the media lobby for—First Amendment safeguards? Open meeting laws? Freer access to public information? Sure, occasionally. But the day-to-day work of a Washington media lobbyist focuses not so much on the front page as the bottom line. That means media muscle gets flexed behind such dubious propositions as giving cigarette companies tax breaks for their nice ads. Or writing loopholes into bills meant to sweep the highways of billboards (owned, often, by media conglomerates). [See sidebar.] Or freeing the TV stations that control the public's airwaves from the responsibility of

Sheila Kaplan is a Washington writer. Research assistance for this article was provided by Roger Baker, Katherine Boo, and Michael Weeks. Financial support was provided by the Project for Investigative Reporting on Money in Politics.

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providing candidates with the air time they need.

If this behind-the-scenes maneuvering is news to you, there's a reason. For all its skill in portraying the influence of money on politics, the establishment press is less zealous in looking at itself. When *The Washington Post* trained its sleuthing powers on the gun lobby, it detailed the honoraria and campaign contributions the National Rifle Association showered on members of Congress and showed how those congressmen voted to weaken federal gun control. It even profiled the media consultant who designs the NRA's ads. That's precisely the kind of scrutiny the press fails to apply to itself.

The $175 mystery meal

"Follow the money," counseled Deep Throat as modern investigative journalism was born. Lots of good reporters have taken the advice. Large papers like *The Washington Post* even purchase computer tapes from the Federal Election Commission that list campaign contributions. But one of the trails you're unlikely to see reporters follow is the one that leads to the front office. What they would find is the usual bag of Washington tricks. Media corporations—whose holdings include not only newspapers but television and radio stations, magazines, and billboards—peddle their influence with familiar tools: PACS, honoraria, junkets, and revolving-door lobbyists.

FEC records show that executives at most of the top media corporations have written checks as well as editorials. Contributions have come from top executives at Gannett (134 newspapers, ten TV stations, 16 radio stations, billboards); Times Mirror (seven newspapers, 15 magazines, four TV stations); The Washington Post Company (two newspapers, four TV stations, and *Newsweek* magazine); Knight-Ridder (37 newspapers, eight TV stations); Cox Enterprises (20 newspapers, nine TV stations); Time Inc. (17 magazines, HBO, Cinemax, and cable affiliates in 32 states); U.S. News and World Report; Capital Cities/ABC (eight TV stations, 39 newspapers and "about 80 magazines," said a spokesperson); NBC; and many others.

Giving money isn't necessarily improper. Media employees, like others, have the right to make contributions. Where the press goes wrong is in its failure to disclose the contributions it's making. Given the media's role as watchdog of *others'* disclosures, this failure is a pointed one. After all, they're the ones who always decry the insidious influence of money on politics. A *Los Angeles Times* editorial, published last winter, is typical: "In return for their money, contributors clearly get favored treatment. All they get is access, the members always protest, but access is the most important thing that a senator or congressman can provide, short of selling a vote outright."

But many media reps try to obscure their identity on FEC campaign and lobbying forms by failing to identify their employer. From the FEC forms alone, you'd never know that the William F. Gorog who channeled $12,000 to Republican candidates through a fund called "Victory 88" (formerly the Jack Kemp Super Bowl Committee), is the same William F. Gorog who was president of the Magazine Publishers Association and who oversaw its Washington office. Nor would you know that the Fred Drasner who gave $1,000 to Michael Dukakis last year also happens to be Fred Drasner, CEO of *U.S. News and World Report*. You wouldn't know it from calling his office either. Drasner failed to return repeated phone calls in reference to the donation. The final call to his office said *The Washington Monthly* would assume the two Drasners were the same unless he called back. He didn't.

The lobbying forms that media representatives must file show a similar zeal for full disclosure. If a lobbyist spends any money pushing his position, the forms ask for the "name and address of recipient, purpose." It doesn't take a J-school degree to figure out that the point of the form is to disclose the name of the congressman or staff member being feted. Newspaper lobbyists usually comply. (Lobbyist Robert Brinkmann noted that his $49.91 lunch at La Brasserie was with "Chuck Parkinson of Senator Abdnor's staff, re: postal rates and costs.") But not the broadcasters. Media General representative Terese Colling had no problem finding a loophole after her May 22, 1986 night on the town. Her recipients are $122, Theater Guild, Kennedy Center and $174.85—Dominique's. Never heard of old Senator Dominique? It's a restaurant. As for who was there gobbling up that $175 meal, the form gives no clues. Lobbyist Jim May of the National Association of Broadcasters says with a shrug, "That's all we have to do." Keep that in mind the next time you hear a self-righteous, Mike Wallace-type intoning the words "failed to disclose. . . ."

Rather than embrace the responsibility of disclosure, some media moguls grow indignant at the very idea. Hal Brown, a vice president of Gannett's billboard division and chairman of the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, dished out $4,500 to congressional candidates during the 1985-86 election cycle; but a Gannett spokesman huffed at the idea that the donations might be newsworthy. "Employees of the company can make

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Most shameful of all is the media lobby's lapdog defense of cigarette ads, under the phony umbrella of First Amendment rights.

contributions to anyone they like," said the spokesman, Sheila Gibbons. "That's acting in their private interest."

It's a coincidence, no doubt, that Brown's private interests happened to reflect the political interests of the members of the Senate public works committee, which regulates billboards. (Isn't it grand when you and your friends are interested in the same things?) Brown was privately interested in giving $1,000 each to Republican committee members Jim Abdnor and Steve Symms, and $500 to Democrat Patrick Leahy. His private interests also included $500 checks to Republican Bob Dole, then the Senate Majority Leader, and Democrat Jim Wright, House Speaker-to-be. Gannett's interest in billboards may have something to do with the fact that they brought in revenues last year of $200 million, mostly from alcohol and tobacco.

Of course, individual contributions are nickel-and-dime stuff compared to the PAC money and honoraria handed out by the media trade organizations. Ten years ago, there was little media money going into federal elections. But that changed with the advent of cable television. Knowing they'd be heavily regulated by Congress and the FCC, cable operators burst on the scene with a sizable PAC and generous honoraria, starting a bidding war of sorts with broadcasters. Each tried to outdo the other in campaign contributions, speaking fees, and all-expense-paid convention trips for their favorite congressmen to places like Hawaii and Las Vegas—seeking, as it is euphemistically known, to "participate in the political process." Between 1985 and August 1988, the National Cable Television Association donated $446,240 to federal candidates. The NAB gave $307,986 during the same period. Last year, the $114,300 the NAB disbursed in speaking fees was more than any trade group except the American Trucking Associations. A nice sum to chat.

"Where in the past individual broadcasters were reluctant to go to make their cases—or make contributions—as they've watched the realtors and the bankers and everybody else, they've realized that they can't be passive," says NAB lobbyist Susan Alvarado. "Those days are over."

While the American Newspaper Publishers Association has no PAC, many executives at news conglomerates channel contributions through their broadcast divisions or other subsidiaries. Times Mirror doesn't have a PAC, but in April 1988, five Times Mirror cable employees gave $4,000 to the National Cable Television Association's CABLE PAC. Similarly, Knight-Ridder has no PAC, but broadcast executive Daniel E. Gold contributed $2,000 to the NAB's TARPAC, which channeled it to congressional candidates.

The newspaper publishers shy away from honoraria. Then again, they have a more potent weapon: editorial endorsements. "I believe when your local newspaper publisher calls up, no matter how gentle they are, you think 'oh jeez, am I going to get an editorial?'" says Rep. Al Swift, who sits on the House telecommunications subcommittee.

The luau lobby

Without that edge broadcasters have to work a little harder. "It's not that they're nicer people," Swift says, "it's just that they don't have editorials." Last spring, NAB brought about 45 members of Congress, key committee staff, and a bevy of FCC officials to their annual meeting in Las Vegas (that nerve center of broadcast journalism). The main attraction was none other than that old broadcaster himself, Ronald Reagan. A few months earlier, it was off to Hawaii for the NAB's "legislative forum"

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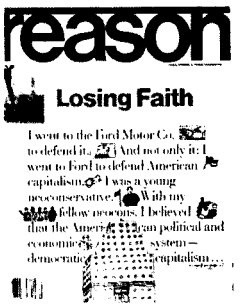

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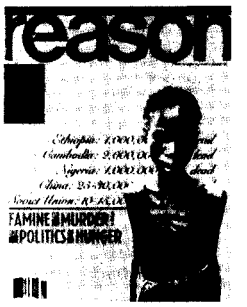

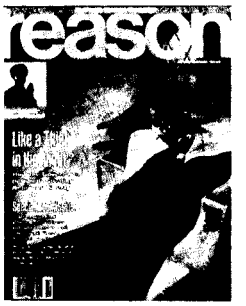

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where key players like Strom Thurmond, ranking Republican on the Senate judiciary committee, and House communications subcommittee members Fred Boucher, John Bryant, Dan Coats, Carlos Moorhead, Al Swift, Thomas Tauke, and Billy Tauzin got to mull those First Amendment issues luau-style. Most took home a $1,500 or $2,000 check for the hardship of leaving Washington for Honolulu in January.

To help the industry stay in touch with Congress between those yearly casino-side exchanges on press freedoms, an increasing number of media companies, including Time and Gannett, keep lobbyists on staff. While Times Mirror has two lobbyists on staff, it also orders out for specialists. It hires the firm of Gold and Liebengood, Inc., generally for what it describes as "First Amendment issues." Gold and Liebengood's First Amendment credentials come from its work for that hotbed of constitutional zeal, the Tobacco Institute. Patrick Butler, a vice president in Times Mirror's Washington office, says the company "is quite willing to take a more public position and aggressiveness in the freedom of the press issues." But otherwise, he said, Times Mirror likes to lie low. "On corporate issues, taxes, we are quite low-key and that's why we retain some of our outside people."

Blowing smoke

With the flexing of all that media muscle, you might think the Constitution never had it so good. Sometimes this phalanx of power brokers actually takes on an issue that's good for the Republic—like the successful 1986 effort to save the Freedom of Information Act. But more often, the business of the media is business.

Most shameful is the media lobby's lapdog defense of cigarette ads, under the phony umbrella of First Amendment rights. The only legitimate free speech issue would concern items like the occasional advertorials sponsored by the Tobacco Institute, expressions of a point of view. Newspapers, which regularly refuse ads for products like pornographic films, know they've got no legitimate First Amendment obligation to peddle cigarettes with pictures of a seductive woman who invites readers to "Light My Lucky." The next time one of those publishers starts boasting to the Rotary Club about his "family newspaper," he might think about all the young lungs his glamorous ads help lure into addiction.

But media lobbyists pulled out the stops last year after Reps. Mike Synar and Robert Whittaker tried to extend the ban on televised tobacco ads to cover newspapers and magazines. Another proposal, introduced by Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark, would have allowed the companies to retain the ads but would have barred them from deducting the ad expense from their taxes. Whittaker received an outpouring of telephone calls and letters from publishers throughout his state, including many on the letterhead of the National Newspaper Association, which represents mostly suburban and rural papers. "They were not very cordial," said one Whittaker

Buy, buy, billboard

Looking for another sign of media money and politics? Signs are the right place to look. News corporations are key players in the $1.3 billion-a-year billboard industry, rightly known as one of Washington's inside rackets.

The billboard boondoggle began in 1965 when Lady Bird Johnson pushed the Highway Beautification Act through Congress. It was meant to sweep signs from our highways so passersby could see a little purple mountains' majesty, instead of placards welcoming them to Marlboro Country. But to get the bill through, lawmakers essentially had to buy off the billboard companies. Taxpayers were required to pay for moving the signs and to compensate the companies for lost revenues—up to $10,000 or more for each billboard, depending on the circumstances.

The racket works like this: billboard owners move the signs, collect the compensation, and put the signs right back up, on nearby land beyond federal control. In 1983, after almost 20 years of billboard "control," more billboards were going up than coming down, reported the Government Accounting Office. And by 1985, the federal government had already paid about $200 million in subsidies.

Who profits from this system? Media conglomerates sure get their share. With $200 million in revenue last year, Gannett Outdoor is the nation's largest seller of outdoor ads. Hal Brown, a senior vice president of Gannett Outdoor, chairs the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, the industry's Washington lobbying group. Morris Communications has a cut of the action, too. In addition to its 17 newspapers, including the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, Morris also owns Naegele Outdoor Advertising, which last year sold $52 million in billboard ads. Ackerley Communications, a Seattle-based chain of TV and radio stations, racked up $76 million in billboard sales. Donrey Media Group, owners of the *Las Vegas Review-*

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aide. Whittaker made a public apology to the Kansas press for implying they were in the pockets of the tobacco lobby. Synar, however, is less circumspect. "The ANPA are the water carriers for the tobacco industry," he said.

Media representatives insist that their interest in the matter is purely constitutional, dismissing the idea that $460 million in newspaper and magazine ads (1986) has quickened their First Amendment concerns. Forget for a moment the irony of those news organizations that take such pride in baring the nation's health hazards throwing their weight behind the country's chief cause of heart disease and lung cancer. And savor instead how the media treats the cherished principle of full disclosure when they're the ones doing the disclosing.

David Starr, publisher of the *Union-News and Republican* in Springfield, Massachusetts and senior editor of Newhouse Newspapers, chairs the ANPA's committee on the First Amendment and freedom of information. Starr introduced what might be called the Red Meat Doctrine, predicting that as cigarette ads go, so go other advertisements: those for beef, which contains cholesterol; contraceptives, "which prevent life"; and wine, since it increases the chances of breast cancer. "Absurd?" Starr asked. "I don't think so." Starr assured Congress that cigarette ads were an insignificant part of newspaper revenues and that his interest was purely constitutional. "We oppose a ban because it threatens free speech," he said.

But what Mr. Freedom of Information failed to mention is that the media companies that own the newspapers usually own magazines, where, as Senator Bill Bradley testified, tobacco conglomerates can account for as much as 30 percent of ad revenues. (Starr also failed to note that the conglomerates that own the top cigarette companies have sometimes punished the enemies of tobacco by withdrawing other ads as well, such as those for food products.) Those economically insignicant tobacco companies spend about $2.4 *billion* a year on tobacco promotion. In 1985, Starr's bosses at Newhouse raked in $3,403,617 in tobacco ads at *Vogue*; $2,666,439 at *Glamour*; $2,902,248 at *Mademoiselle*; and $2,188,192 at *Self*—bastions of First Amendment freedoms, all. But that's just spare change compared to The Washington Post Company's *Newsweek*, which that year inhaled $20.5 million in tobacco ads.

Don't expect Newhouse News's Washington bureau—or virtually any other news agency, for that matter—to clear up Starr's smokescreen. The bureau, which covers D.C. for the 3.5 million people who read the chain's 26 papers, didn't report the issue. It was "just another hearing," says Robert Fichenberg, the D.C. bureau chief. Fichenberg said he knew Starr was in town, but, "I didn't even know what he was testifying on. . . . If indeed there is any [lobbying], we don't know about it until after the fact."

But if the threat to First Amendment freedoms is as dire as the newspaper publishers contend, what accounts for the short shrift that most news organiza-

Journal and more than 60 other small papers, last year counted $9 million in billboard sales.

At least the billboard companies aren't shy about spreading the wealth. A study by the Coalition for Scenic Beauty, an antibillboard lobby, showed that in the past five years the industry has given congressmen $550,000 in speaking fees and hundreds of thousands more in campaign contributions.

But billboard owners choose their candidates carefully. In a 1986 Senate race, Ackerley executives helped defeat Slade Gorton, a crusader for billboard control, with generous donations to his opponent, Brock Adams. Barry Ackerley, the billboard company's president, maxed out with a $2,000 contribution to Adams, with two vice presidents doing the same. Ackerley's wife, Ginger, added $1,000 more. And—surprise!—Adams last year voted against a measure for stricter billboard control.

In 1985, when Quentin Burdick was just another member of the Senate Public Works Committee, the panel that controls billboard legislation, he received only $1,000 from the outdoor advertisers, according to *Common Cause Magazine*. After becoming chairman in 1987, his popularity grew: Burdick collected $31,400 in campaign contributions from the industry in the first six months of the year. He also made nine trips paid for by billboard companies or trade representatives, including those to Las Vegas, New Orleans, and Los Angeles (meals and hotels included). Burdick then played an important role in defeating the plan for stricter billboard control.

The Washington Post, *The Wall Street Journal*, and Knight-Ridder—none of which own billboard companies—all covered the proposed plan for stricter control. But somehow Gannett, with 134 papers, never got around to it, according to the company's library. Nor did Morris Communications's Washington bureau, according to the flagship paper's library. The bureau serves Morris's 17 papers.

Not that billboards don't get *any* play in the papers that own them. Gannett's *Cincinnati Enquirer* took the time to attack a city council plan for billboard control—omitting, as it happened, any mention of Gannett's $200 million billboard revenues. —*S.K.*

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The media lobbyist need never be so vulgar as to mention editorial retaliation. Even the dullest congressman can catch on to that possibility.

tions gave the hearings? The *Los Angeles Times*, one of the few newspapers that has covered the issue, neglected to note the lobbying role of the ANPA. Jack Nelson, chief of the 40-member bureau, said the omission may have occurred because the story was written by an intern. "The fact is, had I known they were lobbying on it, I would have said, 'Put it in.'" Nelson says he tries to keep a firewall between the Times Mirror business interests and his reporters. But, good intentions notwithstanding, this head-in-the-sand approach won't do; his bureau *ought* to know what the media is lobbying for, and ought to report it.

The *Times* bureau's subsequent stories on the tobacco industry continued to omit the publishers' alliance. "Big Tobacco Buying New Friendships," was the headline over a May 1988 story. The reporter, Myron Levin, is an enterprising critic of the tobacco lobby. He spent a year investigating the industry as an Alicia Patterson fellow (and received a *Washington Monthly* journalism award for one of his thoughtful pieces). But his dispatch on tobacco's new allies failed to mention the role of either the ANPA or Times Mirror itself, which shares one of the Tobacco Institute's lobbying firms. Levin said he thought about including his publisher's role in his research, but recent academic studies and journalism reviews had covered the territory. "It didn't seem new," he said. Speaking of the mainstream press, Levin agreed that "we don't cover ourselves right."

One related story that ought to be considered a textbook case of intelligent reporting belonged to *The Washington Post*'s Morton Mintz. In a story on the refusal of Canadian publishers to accept tobacco ads, he acknowledged the *Post*'s financial interests and pointed out that American papers routinely decline ads for other lawful products, like X-rated films. Where did the *Post* play this piece of work? Page H4.

A Byrd's-eye view

Broadcasters, of course, got cut out of the cigarette money years ago when Congress banned televised ads. But the broadcast lobby is no less greedy than the newspaper publishers in pushing for profits while ignoring the public interest. If anything, the broadcasters act more like a typical lobby in their use of junkets, honoraria, and contributions to strengthen their inherently substantial clout. At every turn, the broadcast lobby has done all it can—which is usually quite a lot—to stave off measures that would require a more public-spirited use of the airwaves. They are, after all, the *public's* airwaves. And the licenses to control them are handed out for free. The corporate beneficiaries of this largesse reap huge profits, while voicing indignation at the thought of giving something back.

One recent example concerns the NAB's successful effort to torpedo the Fairness Doctrine, which dates back to the early days of broadcasting, when the FCC required television stations to present balanced views on matters of public concern. Congressmen have typically supported the doctrine since it sets limits on a station's ability to attack them. Ernest Hollings thinks it helped him win his 1959 governor's race in South Carolina, when television stations were required to provide him with a forum while the state's newspapers were arrayed against him.

The broadcasters, eager to run their money machines with no strings attached, argue that with the advent of cable and other sources of information, media voices are sufficiently diverse to render the doctrine obsolete. What this argument ignores is the stunning concentration of media ownership, which leaves fewer corporations calling more shots

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A pen, a paper, and a PAC

Partial list of media contributors with titles, 1985-88:

Anne Cox Chambers, Member of the Board, Cox Enterprises, Inc.: Democratic National Committee, $100,000; Democratic House Senate Council, $3,000; Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, $750; Wyche Fowler for U.S. Senate, $1,000; Citizens Committee for Ernest Hollings, $500; Terry Sanford for U.S. Senate, $1,000.

Steven J. Ross, Chairman, Warner Communications: Democratic National Committee, $100,000.

John Kluge, President/CEO, Metromedia Inc.: Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, $1,000; Dole for Senate Committee, $1,000; Jim Santini for Senate, $500; Shelby for U.S. Senate, $500; Steve Symms for Senate Committee, $1,500; Friends for Jim Abdnor, $1,000.

Lawrence Bossidy, Vice-chairman, General Electric (owner of NBC): Non-Partisan Political Support Committee for GE Co. Employees, $5,000; Senate Majority Fund, $1,000; Dole for President Committee, $1,650.

Edward Hood, Vice-chairman, General Electric: Non-Partisan Political Support Committee for GE Co. Employees, $5,000; Dole for President, $3,000; Friends of Les Aspin, $500; Citizens Committee for Ernest Hollings, $2,000.

Terence P. Mahony, Vice President, Governmental Relations, NBC: Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

Robert C. Wright, President and CEO, NBC: Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

Cory Dunham, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, NBC: Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Chapman, CEO, Knight-Ridder: George Bush for President, $2,000.

N.J. Nicholas Jr., President, Time Inc.: Committee for Tim Wirth, $500.

Brian Conboy, Vice President, Governmental Affairs, Time Inc.: Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

S. Christopher Meigher III, Executive Vice President, Magazine Group, Time Inc.: Pete DuPont for President, $1,000.

Kelso Sutton, President, Books Group, Time Inc.: DNC Services Corp./Democratic National Committee, $5,000; Association of American Publishers PAC, $500; Burdick Campaign Committee, $500; Committee for Tim Wirth, $500; Pete DuPont for President, $500.

Thomas W. Binning, Chief Financial Officer, American Television Communication Corp. (Subsidiary, Time Inc.): Committee for Tim Wirth, $500.

Gary S. Bryson, Vice President, ATC (Subsidiary, Time Inc.): Committee for Tim Wirth, $500.

Trygve E. Myhren, CEO, ATC (Subsidiary, Time Inc.): Committee for Tim Wirth, $1,500; Dole for President Committee, $500; Friends of Gary Hart-1988, $500; National Cable Television Association PAC, $2,000.

Michael Fuchs, CEO, HBO (Subsidiary, Time Inc.): Bill Bradley for Senate '90, $1,000.

Susan Alvarado, E. Bruce Harrison, Co. lobbyist for National Association of Broadcasters: George Bush for President, $1,000.

Wallace Jorgenson, Chairman, National Association of Broadcasters: NAB TARPAC, $2,500; McMillan for Congress Committee, $500.

Daniel H. Ridder, Chairman, *Long Beach Press-Telegram*: Pete DuPont for President, $1,000; Houghton for Congress Committee, $1,000.

Walter T. Ridder, Member of the Board, Knight-Ridder: Milliken for Congress, $960; Committee for Tim Wirth, $1,000; Americans with Hart, $500.

Millicent Feller, Vice President, Public Affairs and Governmental Relations, Gannett: Hal Daub for Congress Committee, $500; Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

Thomas S. Murphy, Chairman, Capital Cities/ABC: NAB TARPAC, $2,500; Committee for Tim Wirth, $1,000; George Bush for President, $1,000; Citizens Committee for Ernest Hollings, $2,000; Berman for Congress, $1,000; Friends of Senator D'Amato, $1,000; Hope for Congress Committee, $500.

Daniel Burke, President/Chief Operating Officer, Capital Cities/ABC: NAB TARPAC, $2,500; Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

Mark H. Cohen, Executive Vice President, ABC Network Group: NAB TARPAC, $1,500.

Stephen Weiswasser, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Capital Cities/ABC: Markey for Congress Committee, $500.

William S. Morris III, CEO and Chairman, Morris Communications, Augusta, Ga.: Glenn Anderson Campaign Committee, $1,000; Howard for Congress Committee, $1,500; J.E. Jumonville Jr. U.S. Senate Campaign Committee, $1,000; Steve Symms for Senate Committee, $1,000.

Houston Harte, Chairman, Harte-Hanks: George Bush for President, $1,000; Lloyd Bentsen Election Committee, $2,000; Dale Bumpers 1986 Reelection Committee, $1,000.

Larry Franklin, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Harte-Hanks: George Bush for President, $1,000.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard J.V. Johnson, President and Publisher, *Houston Chronicle:* Lloyd Bentsen Election Committee, $3,000.

Gene McDavid, General Manager, *Houston Chronicle*: Lloyd Bentsen Election Committee, $1,000.

Gwendolyn Babcock, Member of the Board, Times Mirror: Ed Zschau for U.S. Senate Committee, $1,000.

Brian Greenspun, President, *Las Vegas Sun*: Citizens for Biden Committee 1990, $500; John McCain for Senate, $500.

Eugene Patterson, CEO, St. Petersburg Times Publishing Company: Terry Sanford for U.S. Senate, $1,000.

Larry Wangberg, Chairman, Times Mirror Cable Television: Markey for Congress Committee, $250; Committee for Tim Wirth, $1,000.

Edward O. Fritts, President and CEO, NAB: Markey for Congress Committee, $1,000.

Joseph F. Hladky Jr., Chairman, The Gazette Co., Cedar Rapids, Ia.: Tauke for Congress Committee, $500.

Joe Hladky III, Editor/Publisher, The Gazette Co., Cedar Rapids, Ia.: Tauke for Congress Committee, $500.

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The $114,000 that broadcasters gave congressmen in speaking fees was more than any trade group except the American Trucking Associations.

than anyone could have imagined when the Fairness Doctrine began. In 1982 a study by Ben Bagdikian showed that a scant 52 corporations controlled about half the media outlets in the country; by 1988 he found that number had shrunk to 26. (Not that the broadcasters' free market faith doesn't have its limits: The diversity argument is especially ironic given the broadcasters' zeal to require cable franchises to carry the networks. If it's a competitive, diverse world out there, why the need for special protection?)

There is some merit to a second criticism of the Fairness Doctrine—that it promotes a bland nonpartisanship in which broadcasters quote Longwind Expert Number One and Longwind Expert Number Two, while leaving the dulled viewer no way of knowing who's right. But the assurance of some broadcast balance outweighs that flaw. Since the Reagan FCC repealed the doctrine, broadcasters have had virtually no public obligations in exchange for their public monopoly. (Stations can now renew their licenses merely by sending in a postcard.) Surely this gives the lucrative industry new appreciation for the term free enterprise.

Hollings tried to reinstate the doctrine—and got clobbered. Edward Fritts, president of the NAB, called the lobbying effort "the greatest outpouring of broadcaster concern in modern history," which, sadly enough, may be true. The NAB organized what it calls "a grassroots campaign," flying in TV execs, both network and affiliate, from around the country. Leaving nothing to chance, the NAB called in lobbyists from both sides of the partisan aisle. Reagan vetoed the bill that would have reinstated the doctrine, and, despite its decades of support for the principle, Congress lacked the votes for an override.

"The Fairness Doctrine has such overwhelming support on Capitol Hill, it's a recognition of the tremendous power of electronic media that it didn't go through," said Charles Ferris, a former FCC chairman-turned-lobbyist. Hollings agreed. "Our broadcaster friends are the most powerful I know of. . . ," he told the Senate. "They can change votes right and left, and that is quite understandable. We live and breathe by TV, and that is our reelection. If the local broadcaster calls, you are going to do him a favor. You are not worried about a veto by the president."

If this sounds like blackmail, you won't get the broadcasters to deny it. "There is a lingering apprehension on the part of elected officials, without saying so, that you are wielding a club and could give them some hell," said Robert Brunner, chairman of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, which lobbied against the doctrine. Brunner, executive news editor of WSAZ-TV in Charleston-Huntington, West Virginia, credits the current success in part to his personal relationship with West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd, the Senate Majority Leader. "I think Byrd would vote the other way," Brunner said, "but partially because of my personal lobbying he's moved it from a high-priority must-do thing to something Congress might not get to. . . a victory [for the broadcasters]." When asked about Brunner's comments, Cindy Huber, a press aide to Byrd, said, "Senator Byrd does know Bob Brunner very well and they do talk, and I'm sure they talked about the Fairness Doctrine." Brunner's not alone in seeking to apply the personal touch. "There are people within our own industry who have personal relationships with members of Congress," said Jim May of the NAB. "We encourage that."

If you expected these cozy relationships to come to light in the brave new world of diverse media, think again. At least *The Washington Post*'s editorial attacking the Fairness Doctrine acknowledged that, with four TV stations, the Post Company is not disinterested. That's more than can be said for the

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Atlanta Journal/Constitution, which ran an editorial entitled "Misnamed Fairness Doctrine is actually anything but fair," while failing to note that its owner, Cox Enterprises, Inc. owns TV stations in Atlanta, Oakland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Orlando, and four other cities.

Gannett's *USA Today*, flagship of the 134-newspaper chain and an emblem of corporate consolidation, also chirped in about media "diversity." Calling the Fairness Doctrine "stinkweed," the editorial offered some advice: "If you don't like what you see or hear on one channel, flip the dial." It failed to point out that Gannett owns ten TV stations. (If you flip the dial you might still be watching Gannett.) The paper did reassure its readers that the doctrine's demise was nothing to worry about. "No changes for news, broadcasters predict," crooned the headline.

While newspapers disguised their corporate interest, the networks seemed to ignore the issue altogether. *Washington Post* TV critic Tom Shales said he did not see one television story on the Fairness Doctrine battle. "I would call up these guys and say, 'why don't you cover this?' " he said. "They just said that no one could possibly understand this issue and didn't get it on the air."

Junk-food democracy

With that kind of public-mindedness, you can imagine how the broadcast lobby reacted to Rep. Samuel Stratton's proposal to give free air time to political candidates. What's that? You've never even *heard* of such a proposal? Only a cynic could suspect the fact that most major newspapers also own TV stations—which one consultant estimated took in more than $300 million in paid political ads during the 1986 congressional races alone—helps account for the silence.

With an average senator now raising $10,000 a week, every week, the importance of this reform is hard to overstate. The cost of campaigns boosts the role of PACs, strengthens the hands of special interest groups, and deters talented outsiders from running for office. And in the electronic age, nothing drives the campaign inflation like the cost of televised ads.

What to do? Make the stations give free air time to the candidates. The stations are sure *getting* free air time—24 hours of it a day. With political ads accounting for no more than 4 percent of ad time (even in major markets), it's not much to demand of the profit-rich industry in return. It would allow politicians to attend fewer fundraisers and more legislative hearings. It would loosen the grip of PACs. And by allowing challengers to broadcast their message just as much as incumbents, it would help make democracy more democratic.

But rather than give free time (or mere discounts, as one bill proposes), broadcasters typically *hike the rates* 30 days before the ballots are cast.

In response to recent proposals to require discounted time, the broadcast lobby tried to convince Congress that the cost of TV ads wasn't so much after all. "There is nobody up here in this body who runs for political office in a contested race who would believe that for a minute," said Senator Mitchell McConnell to a broadcaster's claim that TV and radio ads account for only 34 percent of a campaign's cost. "I think, with all due respect, it is kind of insulting to our intelligence." Curtis Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, examined the most competitive Senate races and found the average broadcast expenditure to be about 80 percent.

With their study rebuffed, media lobbyists took a philosophical tack. "Is the cost of campaigning too high?" mused NAB president Ed Fritts before Congress. "In the eyes of some, probably. But when one considers its importance to the functioning of our democracy, others would say, probably not." (Particularly if they own a TV station.) After all, Fritts went on to note in a little consumer products lesson, the $400 million that politicians who made it to the general election spent campaigning in 1986 "is less than what Americans spend each year on popcorn at movie theaters alone. Four hundred million is less than what Americans spend on soft drinks each week of the year. Four hundred million is what Americans spend on candy each quarter." Appealing, no doubt, to the would-be Churchills in the crowd, Fritts concluded reassuringly: "Certainly the value received in our democracy from electing all members of Congress is at least equal to that given by our consumption of popcorn, soft drinks, and candy."

Aside from his jaunt into political theory, Fritts offered some practical advice. Stop worrying about the cost of TV ads, he told the legislators, and "focus. . . [on] improv[ing] the quality of education which voters receive. . ." The broadcast lobby, he said, vigilant citizens ever, was "prepared to make some constructive suggestions to those ends."

McConnell, for one, is on to the game. "Why should we work extra time raising money to make them richer?" he said. "I do think it's excessive greed." Then again, the senator's not surprised that the broadcasters—with their profits, PACs, and lobbyists—see no problem in the marriage of media, money, and politics. □

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Why We Need A New Dickens

Everyone cares about Oliver Twist. Now we need to help the Artful Dodgers.

by Matthew Cooper

Christmas is always the busy season for Dickens, but this year there's more going on than usual. There's a Bill Murray remake of *A Christmas Carol* (playing the perfect eighties Scrooge—a TV exec too busy to do lunch with his ghost) and, for the truly sturdy, a two-part, six-hour film of *Little Dorrit*. Coming soon: Disney's *Oliver Twist*. And a new biography of Dickens is getting prominent reviews, including front-page billing in *The Washington Post Book World*.

But what's been missing from the articles I've read about these works is the recognition of Dickens's central accomplishment: he prodded (and entertained) millions of readers into caring about the poor. Instead of seeing the poor, as Malthus did, as some abstract, seething mass of "surplus population," Dickens saw them as individuals, engaging enough to merit novels of 700, 800, 900 pages. He made his readers see them that way too. And that was a revolutionary accomplishment.

One indication of his influence lies in numbers. He was the best-selling author in Victorian England, writing novels that became standard household items, as common as candles and brooms. In the 12 years after he died, nearly four million copies of his books sold in Britain alone—an amazing feat even by Stephen King standards. When it came to influence, Daniel Webster argued that Dickens had "done more to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen Great Britain had sent into Parliament." Even the conservative *Economist* conceded that Dickens fueled "the age's passion—we call it so designedly—which prevails to improve the condition of the working classes." Queen Victoria hailed his humanizing influence on the nation and his "strongest sympathy with the poorer classes."

As for the poor themselves, they not only saw Dickens as their champion, they *read* him. Journals of the period are filled with accounts of chimney sweeps and factory hands captured by his work. And when they couldn't make out all the words, there were plenty of illustrations to help them along. The working classes responded by deluging Dickens with invitations to speak before their guilds. "Ah! Mr. Dickens," shouted a carriage driver to Dickens's son, on the day of the novelist's funeral. "Your father's death was a great loss to all of us—and we cabbies were in hopes that he would be doing something to help us."

It was not without reason, then, that Dostoevski called Dickens "the great Christian." Characters like Oliver Twist and Mr. Bumble, who ran the infamous workhouse, carry lessons as old as the New Testament. When Mr. Bumble terrorized Oliver for asking for a second helping of gruel, even affluent Englishmen knew how the orphan felt. They knew, too, that they had an obligation to help. That kind of empathy stoked the era's major reform movements. The resulting bouquet of triumphs included everything from fewer working hours to free education and universal suffrage.

There's more to Dickens, though, than misty-eyed sentiment. His was a subtle and muscular vision that

Matthew Cooper is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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recognized (and condemned) the sins of impoverished individuals as well as the collective guilt of a society. Dickens gives us not only Oliver Twist but Fagin, the criminal ringleader who pressgangs Oliver into service. He's no victim of society. Fagin's problem is Fagin.

Is there any relevance in this today? After all, the sprawling squalor of Victorian Britain has gone the way of the workhouse. The *laissez-faire* liberalism that Dickens deplored is light-years away from today's social welfare state. (No food stamps had Oliver. No case-worker.) But America today is in at least one way like the England of the 1830s: most of us see the underclass as a seething, abstract mob. Of course, it's not just our artists who've failed us, but our politicans too. And it's too much to expect all art to serve as social glue, binding each of us to the concerns of the less fortunate. But today, when so much fiction is either mired in minimalist ennui or panting with the lifestyles of the rich and promiscuous, we need someone who can animate our social concern. We need a new Dickens.

A street-walking man

Where to find one? My guess is that it can only be someone who has seen poverty up close; perhaps a journalist. Dickens himself became acquainted with the poor as what today's social scientists would call a "participant observer." He was one of them.

His father, John Dickens, tried to give his children a life of parlours and singing lessons on the paycheck of a navy clerk. As a result, like so many working people of the time, the Dickens family floated in and out of debtors' prison (bringing their servant with them, as was the custom of the day). By 1822, when Charles was ten, debt's constant tug forced his family to yank him out of school and place him in a factory pasting labels on pots of shoe polish. When not at work, he spent long days wandering the alleys of work-weary London. With his parents often imprisoned, describing what he saw there became a way of mastering a hostile world. He'd jot down dozens of "sketches," detailed descriptions of just about anything he'd run into. They captured not only turmoil and toil, but character. Typical was the one about his uncle's Soho barber, a man who, playing Monday-morning quarterback, recounted how he would have guided Napoleon's troops at Waterloo.

Eventually his family earned its freedom and Dickens became a law clerk, allowing him to tame "the savagery of stenography," as he put it, and later become a reporter. At the time, reporting mostly meant taking shorthand, but Dickens was so talented an editor called him "the most rapid, the most accurate, and the most trustworthy reporter then engaged on the London press."

His star rising, Dickens didn't leave the poor behind. Instead he sketched them. Under the pseudonym "Boz," he churned out copy about vulgar vendors, ragged children, raging arguments. In "The Pawnbroker's Shop," Dickens presented his comfortable readers with a prostitute: "the lowest of the low; dirty, unbonneted, flaunting and slovenly." In his "Visit to Newgate," he took them inside a prison that housed children. "Fourteen terrible little faces we never beheld.—There was not one redeeming feature among them—not a glance of honesty—not a wink expressive of anything but the gallows and the hulks, in the whole collection."

This kind of firsthand experience became central to Dickens's fiction. To write *Hard Times*, for instance, he traveled to the north to cover a workers' strike. He was no sit-in-the-study author. After writing in the mornings Dickens would take afternoon walks of ten miles or more that returned him to the streets that powered his prose.

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What's missing from the recent articles is the recognition of Dickens's central achievement: He prodded (and entertained) millions of readers into caring about the poor.

Obviously it wasn't just the reporting that made Dickens Dickens. It takes a little more than stenography, and a lot of something called imagination, to spin a 900-page novel. But Dickens's immersion in street life made his novels richer. When a barrister picked up Dickens's work, he saw his servants and his slums. He saw his London.

The stenographer's eye and the novelist's mind gave Dickens the ability—virtually unprecedented—to make the poor seem real. As Gertrude Himmelfarb explains in *The Idea of Poverty*, this was a time when servants were invisible, even to their masters. When a contemporary critic hailed Dickens's talent for making a "washerwoman as interesting as a duchess," it was a tribute not only to Dickens's wonderful prose, but to his new vision.

After all, one of the main characters in his first lengthy work of fiction, the serial *Pickwick Papers*, is Sam Weller, a servant. He not only fails to remain invisible; more often than not he seems a good deal wiser than his master. When he first signs on as Pickwick's valet, the negotiations turn into a "Who's-on-first?" routine that sounds like Weller is hiring Pickwick. Weller still seems in control when Pickwick checks into an inn. After Pickwick stumbles into the wrong bedroom, only to be kicked out by a very unhappy woman, it's Weller who rescues him and guides him to his room. "You rather want somebody to look after you, sir wen your judgement goes out a wistin'," Weller chirps. The servant's introduction in the serial's fourth issue sent sales surging.

In his next book, *Oliver Twist*, and throughout the other novels he was to write until his death in 1870, Dickens stuck to the simple proposition that no class had a monopoly on smarts or morality or decency or humor. This was a revolutionary creed at a time when the affluent saw the poor as a mob—to be feared or appeased, perhaps, but definitely not to be considered as individuals. And the rich were scarcely alone in their class-bound vision. As Dickens was spinning novels, the history of the working class in Manchester was being written by a German emigre named Friedrich Engels.

The idea of Jacobin-style revolution haunted Dickens, who poured his fears into prose in *A Tale of Two Cities*. In our century of failed revolutions, there's no more haunting or timely image than Dickens's Madame DeFarge, knitting by the guillotine. He recognized that, just as the poor weren't all good, the rich weren't all bad. His pages brim with venal landlords, nasty bankers, and callous captains of industry; but good-guy capitalists pop up too. A product of the streets himself, Dickens saw no romance in revolution. It's not the proletariat who overthrew Scrooge, but his conscience.

If Dickens feared revolution, he didn't fall into the opposite trap of forgetting why mobs charged the barricades. He understood that the capitalist society was rife with institutions that kept the poor down. The villains of *Hard Times* aren't just bad apples, but overlords of a cruel factory system, dehumanizing in the monotony of its work. The tragedies of *Bleak House*, one of his last and gloomiest books, are found in the systematic injustice of the courts. By challenging these *institutions*, he made the lawyer or factory owner see that they shared responsibility.

The idea of poverty

And when Dickens trained his guns, liberals weren't exempt. The workhouse that Dickens took on in *Oliver Twist* was one of the most prominent liberal programs of his day. Today it's hard to think of the book's cruel overseers as being progressive. But the Poor Law of 1834 was considered a great liberal victory, one that would segregate the indebted poor and prevent them from dragging their fiscally

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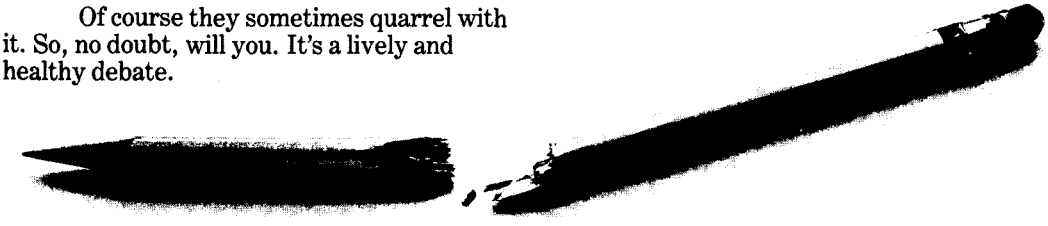

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responsible neighbors into the red. (Talk about the unintended consequences of liberal reform.) When Oliver meekly seeks a double dose of gruel, we see unbridled cruelty. "Enlightened" Victorians saw themselves.

And what they saw was folly. Consider the way that Mr. Bumble—who runs the "progressive" workhouse—understands Oliver's revolt.

" 'It's meat.'

" 'What?' exclaimed Mrs. Sowerberry.

" 'Meat, ma'am, meat,' replied Bumble, with stern emphasis. 'You've over-fed him, ma'am. You've raised a artificial soul and spirit in him, ma'am, unbecoming a person in his condition.' "

The humor of the scene helps carry its meaning. Had Dickens's criticisms been heavy-handed, as Steven Marcus points out, middle-class readers wouldn't have touched his works. Instead of promoting a specific alternative to the workhouse, he satirized it, appealing to his readers' Christian charity. A second key to Dickens's success is his choice of the symbol of the good child, in Oliver Twist or Little Dorrit or David Copperfield. He tapped the well-springs of protectiveness that cultures can be made to feel for the young. Martin Luther King put that same insight into action when Birmingham school children stared down firehoses and police dogs, leaving us with one of the most arresting image of the civil rights movement.

But even as he skewered institutions, Dickens understood that the poor were often in the wrong themselves. If anything, there's a schism in his writing, dividing what you might call, for lack of better terms, the worthy poor from the unworthy—between those who merit our admiration and those who don't.

Winning hands down in the Worthy Category, family division, are the *Christmas Carol*'s Cratchits. It's not just their "conditions" that make them sympathetic—the fact that they're poor or that Bob Cratchit has a boss like Scrooge or that Tiny Tim needs crutches. It's the family's own nobility that lends the story such power, remake after remake. One clear signal to Victorian readers was the Cratchits' white-glove cleanliness—a paramount virtue at a time when filth was almost always followed by disease. The Cratchits were "darned and brushed" before the Christmas feast. After supper "the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept." In the Cratchits, like Oliver Twist or David Copperfield or Little Dorrit, respectable British middle-class readers found an ideal of themselves.

Meanwhile, a first in Unworthiness might go to the brickmakers of *Bleak House*, who seem like something out of a documentary on battered wives.

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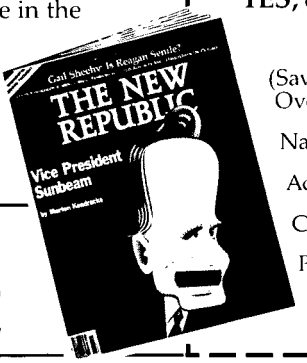

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THE MINDS THAT MATTER

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We spy them when Mrs. Piggle happens by. "An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty—it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally onwholesome," boasts the father. "And we've had five dirty and onwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them. . . . And how did my wife get that black eye? Why, I giv' it her; and if she says I didn't she's a Lie!" Today, when many liberals still romanticize the poor, Dickens's ability to distinguish poverty from nobility is well worth remembering.

Dickens understood that there were good and bad individuals within every class. But he rarely saw the individuals who were a mixture of good and bad. His heroes and heroines don't whine, don't curse, and even though they're raised in the company of foul-mouthed, cockney villains, they speak the King's English. To be sure, his supporting cast could include people like the Peggottys in *David Copperfield* who were not so well spoken. But they too were practically flawless. This strict division between the worthy and the unworthy poor is more than an aesthetic flaw. It limits Dickens's relevance today.

Dickens makes his readers want to help the *deserving* poor. And, indeed, the Victorian (and New Deal) reforms that were, in part, inspired by Dickens focused on these able-to-help-themselves characters. Kids who'd be okay if child labor was abolished; workers who'd prosper with a union. This is the story of America through the 1950s: the New Deal and rising prosperity catapult the "worthy" poor into the middle class. Oliver goes to Levittown.

This left behind an underclass that seemed short on lovable Cratchits and long on pregnant teens, drug addicts, and gang members. What we don't have is the popular literature that will jar the affluent into caring about these less savory characters. We don't have the literature that will condemn their faults *and* recognize that these are people who can be helped. When I worked in a Big Brothers program in New York City, I remember noticing that there was no novel or film that got at the downright weird complexities of those tenements I visited on 102nd Street. I couldn't point to any book that explained how those kids could be such utter failures in school, unable at age 15 to write a single sentence, and still be as sharp and savvy and as alert as any kids I had known growing up in the New Jersey suburbs. There was no film that I could tell my friends about that captured the complexity of those mothers I would meet who'd blow much of their money on VCRs and HBO, but who were also selfless when it came to helping their kids. There was—and still is—no writer who combines great talent and great popularity and who captures that bizarre marriage of sin and decency I saw in those tenement families.

The Dickens character who most reflects our dilemma is the Artful Dodger, the young pickpocket who befriends Oliver Twist. He's engaging to be sure. The first thing we see him do is take Oliver drinking; by the end, he's in court, trying to sweet-talk a magistrate into pardoning him. But he's a sidedish. We never understand or care about him the way we care about Oliver. The next Dickens needs to put us not in our Olivers' shoes, but in those of our own Artful Dodgers.

While a new Dickens couldn't cure poverty, he could inspire personal commitment from the middle class. I don't mean the anesthesia of paying for yet another government program, but involvement. And that takes understanding. Public health care won't improve unless talented doctors and nurses want to choose Harlems over Humanas, at least for a few years. We won't really become a kinder, gentler nation unless our leaders know something that's true about those on the bottom. But working with or for the poor requires inspiration; it doesn't come naturally. Individuals disappoint. Projects collapse. Easier lives beckon. Great art, as opposed to Brookings reports, can be the spur we need.

In 1945 Lionel Trilling lamented that no writer in his day had done what many of the leading Victorian writers had done—combine great literature and social concern. "In three-four decades, the liberal progressive has not produced a single writer that itself respects and reads with interest. A list of writers in our time shows that liberal progressivism was a matter of indifference to every writer of large mind—Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, Mann, Kafka, Yeats." The absence of such a writer may have been a marginal loss in the middle of this century, when the politics of the time were liberal even if the great novelists were not or when poverty seemed like it could be erased simply through economic expansion and a few social reforms. Today when politicians are retreating from helping the poor and growth offers no panacea, we need another Dickens to inspire each of us to help.

I don't know if there will be a single figure—be it a novelist or filmmaker or journalist—who can animate a nation's imagination the way Dickens did, or whether it may take a disparate group, or even an artistic movement. But I'm certain those Dickens-like qualities will not be had by some writer-in-residence strolling the hallowed halls of Haverford. The Dickens mantle demands a life outside the academy, exposed to the real world. It belongs to the writer who can make us care not only about our Tiny Tims but our Artful Dodgers, too. □

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

RICHARD PERLE HAS ORDERED THREE

Mindscape, a software manufacturer, is selling "Visions of Aftermath," a "post-war nuclear simulation [that] allows players to realistically recreate a world after a nuclear holocaust."

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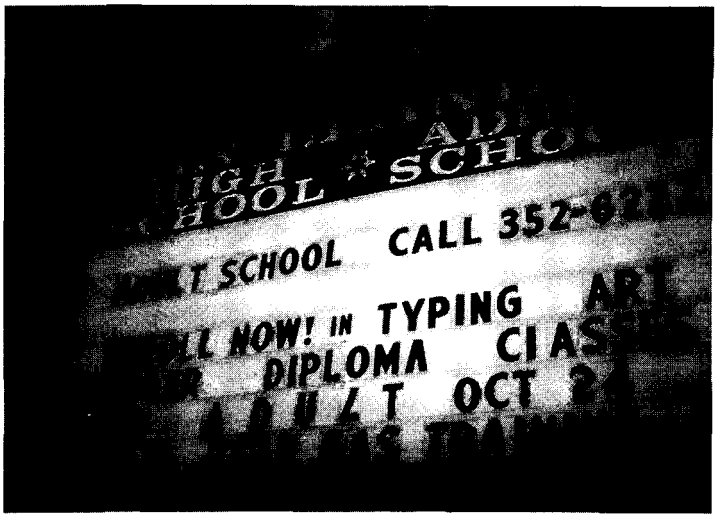
NASA has provided a $200,000 grant to develop a new variety of sweet potato that can be grown in space.

ADULT EDUCATION



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PRESIDENT BUSCH

A recent survey of 8- to 12-year-olds found they could name 5.2 alcoholic beverages but only 4.8 presidents.

TIME'S RUNNING OUT

Warren Dennis of Pasadena is selling "Debtman," a calendar-clock that can give a readout on the latest national debt figure.

ANOTHER LIBERAL COVER-UP

A recent subscription appeal from *Human Events* said: "The major television networks—ABC, NBC, CBS, and others—are not telling you the whole truth about the candidates for president in these crucial 1988 elections. . . In fact, if the liberals in the media have their way, America will elect Mike Dukakis president. . . . Have you heard anywhere. . . about his furlough plan for convicted murderers that has already resulted in murders, rapes, and other violent crimes?"

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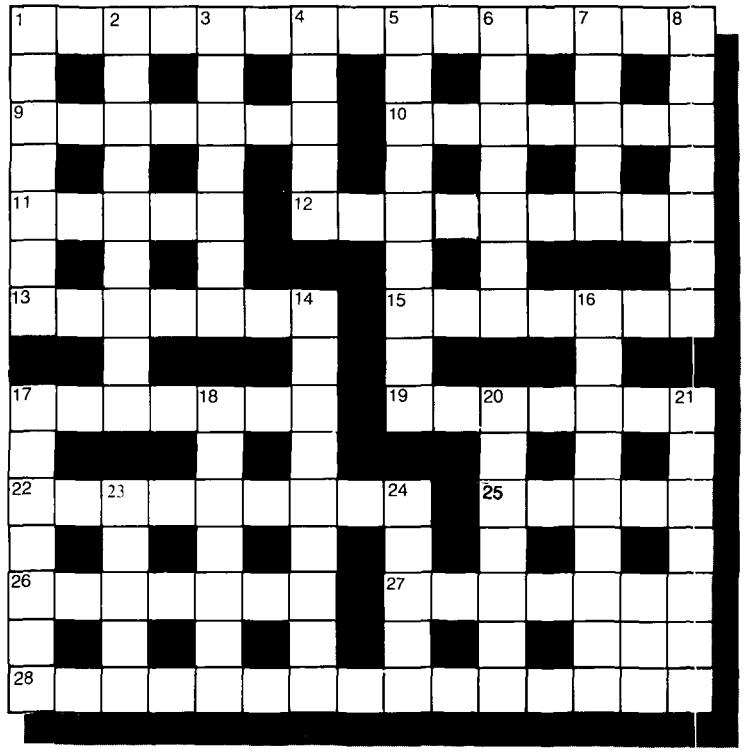
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



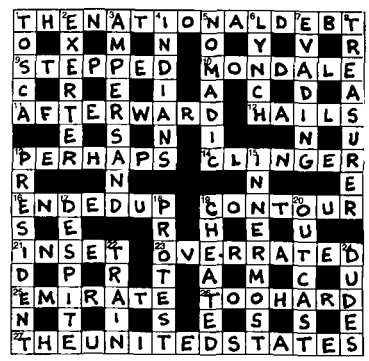
ACROSS

1. Let a chic tux never be tailored for Washington power group. (9,6)
9. Late cab hustling is a sign of good play. (7)
10. Nearest storm on the Atlantic Coast. (7)
11. TV part about a crazy man returning. (5)
12. Causes green den's remodeling. (9)
13. Trail this way, fifty and a thousand after Greek character. (7)
15. Drunkard going both ways in center of Nepal. (7)
17. Reports awkward smile before transgression. (5,2)
19. Geoffrey mixed carbon car hue. (7)
22. Lack of substitution made stream fit. (5,4)
25. Did not look favorably on horrible death. (5)
26. New Orleans in Italy. (7)
27. Singular misfortunes of playwright's family. (7)
28. Diet abstracted from *Gobi Valley Diet*. (11,4)

DOWN

1. Broken cleat is flexible. (7)
2. Prolonging of former stress? (9)
3. Italian name in Rome, but misspelled. (7)
4. Castle takes directions in anger. (5)
5. Leaderless vice-regent shifting around is very active. (9)
6. Dislikes two Poles in tears. (7)
7. Relative who is nice around start of Easter season. (5)
8. Broken shad net catches telephone. (7)
14. Nine atoms' different state. (9)
16. Translated local poet in Idaho. (9)
17. Wild fur sale turndown. (7)
18. Goes to court about returning path and ties. (7)
20. Scatter the late Olympian. (7)
21. Dyes rib carefully and goes on. (5,2)
23. Sign in again clumsy ogre about fifty. (5)
24. Native upsets personal travel declaration. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Who Got Einstein's Office? Eccentricity and Genius at the Institute for Advanced Study. Ed Regis. *Addison-Wesley, $17.95.* Had anyone suggested a year ago that general-interest books by and about theoretical physicists would become wildly popular, the response would undoubtedly have been, "Surely you're joking." That changed when *"Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman,"* a humorous autobiographical work by Nobel laureate Richard Feynman, hit *The New York Times*'s best-seller list. It wasn't the only one. *Chaos*, by James Gleick, made the best-seller list earlier this year; Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* entered its 29th week on the list in mid-November, at which time it was ranked number one. Regis's new work therefore has a well-tested market.

The book is a history of the Institute for Advanced Study, the private research institute founded in 1930 by Caroline Bamberger Fuld and her brother, Louis Bamberger, in Princeton, New Jersey. Not many people were in a position to make large philanthropic donations that year, but the Bambergers had just sold their highly profitable department store the summer before (they received their $25 million, much of it in cash, six weeks before Black Thursday). The Bambergers hoped the institute would be a haven where a select group of natural scientists, mathematicians, social scientists, and historians would spend their days thinking great thoughts, unmolested by the outside world. That has also meant unmolested by teaching (the institute has never conferred degrees); unmolested by grant-writing (a permanent member's salary today is about $90,000); and even unmolested by other institute members (there have been remarkably few collaborations at the institute).

The problem is that, after they arrive, the institute's great thinkers often stop producing great thoughts. One gets the impression that the institute hasn't been an "intellectual hotel" so much as a rest-home for geniuses. The first permanent member was Albert Einstein, whose fame was unrivaled, but whose best work was already behind him. Other geniuses followed. Kurt Godel, the mathematician popularized in Douglas Hofstadter's *Godel, Escher, Bach*, came to the institute in 1940, but after his permanent appointment in 1953, he virtually stopped publishing. Not everyone fell asleep at the wheel. Wolfgang Pauli did important work on particle physics there. (Pauli won the Nobel prize for his exclusion principle, a theory that, among other things, explains why a table, or any piece of matter, doesn't just collapse—matter is, after all, mostly empty space.) One explanation for the institute's lack of brainy breakthroughs may be that its scholars usually don't become prominent enough to deserve appointments until they're old—and perhaps burned out. But Regis also raises the theory, advanced by others, that the institute's very isolation is the cause of this sloth; that is, given *no* outside stimulation, a person doesn't concentrate harder, he dozes off. As one of Orson Welles's characters put it, "Switzerland had 500 years of peace and all they produced was the cuckoo clock." Anyone who has tried to "get

Illustration by Paul Landacre

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American Conservationists

By Douglas H. Strong

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"STOP THEM DAMN PICTURES"

That's what "Boss" Tweed demanded when he saw the handwriting on the Hall (Tammany, that is). But the pictures didn't stop. "Boss" Tweed met his maker in the Ludlow Street Jail and Thomas Nast put bitingly eloquent political cartoons squarely and permanently in the middle of American political life. Tweed aside, we think Emerson had it right when he said, *"Caricatures are often the truest history of the times."*

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ahead" on work at the beginning of a long vacation will understand the problem.

Along with the biography, there is also a decent amount of science in this book, explained in a clever and patient way that tells the by-now-curious reader what these people have actually thought about. The reader won't come out knowing all there is to know about the partial width of the cross section of semileptonic vector meson decay, but he will get enough to satisfy his curiosity, while keeping his attention. Regis's scientific judgments aren't always as good as his explanations—he implies that Robert Oppenheimer ("the father of the atomic bomb") was as important to experimental physics as Pauli was to theoretical physics (a dubious assertion)—but that takes little away from the book.

It would be nice to believe that the current physics vogue stems from a genuine interest in science. But the oooh-aaah tone of many of the recent releases suggests the fascination is with celebrity—the idea of genius, not the ideas of geniuses. The scientists we meet spend a lot of time trading clever quips with their Nobel laureate colleagues and flying around to sexy places like Switzerland, to check on the particle accelerator, or Sweden, to pick up The Prize. How nice that this work shows a genuine interest in ideas.

As to the question posed by the title, you'll have to read the book.

—*Nicholas Martin*

Beirut: City of Regrets. Eli Reed, Fouad Ajami. *Norton, $19.95.* Lebanon, a French consul wrote in 1913, is a land without patriotism, in which each official is ready "to set his country on fire to light his cigarette." In the essay accompanying this collection of photographs, Fouad Ajami, a Lebanese-born professor, shows Beirut as a patchwork of competing dreams, doomed to tear apart. For centuries, the one-time Phoenician port was a refuge for religious dissidents and ethnic exiles from across the region: the Druze, Shi'a Muslims, Maronite Christians, Armenians, and finally, Palestinians. Most of them had nowhere else to run. For a time prosperity provided a common thread. Almost alone among Arab cities, Beirut enjoyed a free press and easy commerce with the libertine West. But when ambitions clashed—abetted by the West and Middle Eastern states—a fight to the death was the only available option.

This is a book of the Beirut that the West has come to know since 1975: a free-fire zone where alliances shift by the hour and where killing is so stylish that teenagers wear their AK-47s like Calvin Klein jeans. The pictures, taken by the American photojournalist Eli Reed during a period of heavy fighting in 1983, also show how life goes on amidst the slaughter. We see a beauty queen, Miss Lebanon, at home with her mother, or a family picnicking by the Mediterranean, just a few feet from the rusted hull of a half-sunk ship.

The text, written by a Shi'a Muslim who now teaches at Johns Hopkins, shows how Beirut became the theater in which blood feuds were played out: between Iran and Iraq, between Palestinians and both Israel and Syria. In Ajami's narrative, America appears as the last in a long line of innocents who thought that some sanity could be restored. The result, of course, was the death of 241 American servicemen, and dozens of individual tragedies. Malcom Kerr, for one. As president of the American University of Beirut, he returns to his native city to continue the work his missionary parents had begun and is murdered on his way to work in 1984: "He was born in the same hospital where he was pronounced dead."

Taken together with the photos, Ajami's essay paints a vivid portrait of a place where the center cannot hold. If it does little to change our image of Beirut, this book does add depth and pathos to a story without clear villains or heroes. It also conjures a bit of the magic that kept men like Kerr returning to resurrect the dream of a Muslim/Christian city-state by the sea. Beirut was a place where you "could ski in the mountains in the morning and swim in the afternoons," a city that "lived by its wits" and enjoyed a freedom and

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prosperity bred of silk, trade, and cultural diversity.

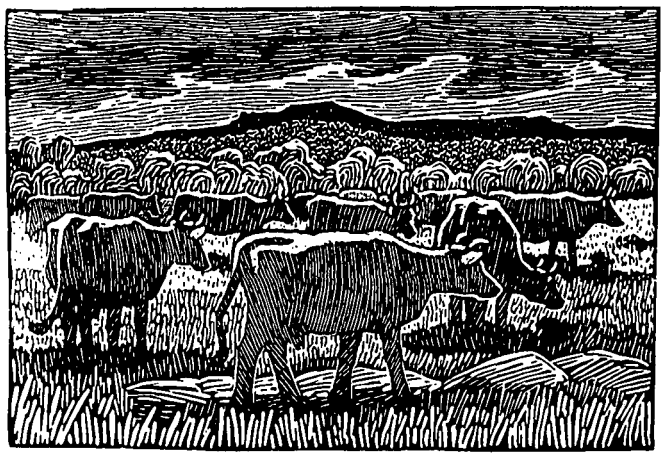
Ironically this depressing volume appears just as some good news for Beirut may finally have broken. Iran's retreat from its war with Iraq bodes ill for the revolutionary fundamentalism that the Ayatollah Khomeini brought to the region in 1979. It appears likely that Iran-backed fighters in Beirut may be forced to strike a conciliatory note as well. If nothing else, this is a welcome development for those Westerners, captivated like so many others by Beirut, who have been paying for their attraction to the city by being shuttled for months or years, in blindfolds, from one safehouse to another.

—*Tony Horwitz*

Duty, Honor, Vietnam: Twelve Men of West Point. Ivan Prashker. *Arbor House/William Morrow, $19.95.* West Pointers in combat have always attracted an attention that is disproportionate to their numbers in the Army's officer corps. That is partially because they are an obvious symbol of the officer brethren. As Black Jack Pershing decreed in 1917, "The standards for the American Army will be those of West Point." Another reason for the spotlight is that West Pointers have so dominated the upper ranks of the Army. Although comprising only 1 percent of the officers in World War II, military academy graduates accounted for more than half of the division commanders and included such celebrated figures as Eisenhower, Bradley, MacArthur, and Patton. At the peak of the Vietnam war, 21 of the 30 top army officers in the war zone were academy graduates, including, of course, William C. Westmoreland, class of 1936.

Prashker has tapped our fascination with the products of "that rockbound highland home" by profiling a dozen officers who fought the war and whose links to West Point permit an examination of how Vietnam subsequently affected the military academy. He is shrewd enough, however, to focus not on the commanders at the top, but rather on platoon leaders and company commanders. By describing the ties they maintain to their alma mater, he shows the war's profound impact on West Point and the Army at-large.

Vietnam was hard on West Point. Not only did the academy lose many of its cherished sons—about 300 West Pointers died in Southeast Asia—but when Americans grew weary of the conflict, their hostility inevitably was directed at the academy, as though it was the *casus belli* rather than an instrument of the war. The cocksure ebullience that prevailed at West Point in the mid-1960s, when instructors posted placards in their offices that declared, "War is my business and business is good," gradually gave way to a dour realization that there was very little to cheer about in this war. In the early 1970s, West Point had difficulty attracting qualified young men because of the national opprobrium toward the military. A sea-change in attitudes toward authority and toward West Point's venerated values—duty, honor, and country—led to the massive cheating scandal in 1976, in which 150 cadets were expelled. The academy's 47th superintendent, Major General Samuel W. Koster, was



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forced to resign in disgrace after an investigation tied him to the My Lai massacre of 1968.

Prashker's group portrait shows, for a certain breed, there is no higher calling than commanding other men in the dark of night. Colonel Robert A. "Tex" Turner, currently the academy's director of military instruction, describes the unalloyed joy of being a battalion commander in the 1970s: "Christ, there I was, out in the foxholes, taking PT tests with them, walking 40-, 80-kilometer raids with them, doing all that—which I'd set up, I'm sorry to say. Goddam, it was beautiful." There are also telling vignettes about the pain of being an officer after the war had gone bad and the military profession had fallen from public esteem. Roy K. Flint, currently West Point's dean, recalls being confronted by antiwar demonstrators who held out coin boxes before a Christmas Eve service at the academy chapel in 1972. "Will you give for Vietnam?" the demonstrators asked. Flint brushed past them, snapping, "I already have."

Yet by focusing on only a dozen men who remained in the service and are certifiable success stories—nine reached the rank of full colonel, one is a brigadier general, two are lieutenant colonels—Prashker skews his sample in a crucial and unfortunate fashion. One of the most profound impacts of the war was the way it both directly and indirectly drove huge numbers of academy graduates out of the Army. By selecting only West Pointers who remained in the service, Prashker ignores the vast segment of the long, gray line that stampeded out and whose stories are equally, if not more, compelling.

Duty, Honor, Vietnam, however, has more serious shortcomings. The profiles are disjointed, and are set in wan, prosaic terms. Prashker has little sense of scene-building and consequently few of the battle anecdotes convey a sense of vivid immediacy. While there are intriguing glimpses of the emotional ferment within some characters—as when one colonel's wife reveals that she considered divorce during the strained early years of marriage—these inner lives are seldom developed in a way that compels the reader's involvement.

Finally, in search of a unifying element to bind his dozen officers together, Prashker regrettably settles on himself. Where the author is genuinely a part of the story, intrusion is warranted and even welcome—Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie* comes to mind. But in *Duty, Honor, Vietnam*, the interviewer-as-character is gratuitous. We are treated, for example, to an interminable account of the difficulties of catching a cab from the train station in Peekskill to West Point. On another occasion, Prashker complains about being kept waiting on two occasions while the colonel he hopes to interview is tied up in conference with a brigadier general: "Don't you know that that goddamn general had Turner in his office on the floor until almost 11:30! Zapped by the same one-star twice! I couldn't believe it, but that's a true story." Perhaps so, but unfortunately, it has nothing to do with the larger story Prashker set out to tell.

—Rick Atkinson

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